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THE WRESTLER

THE **Wrestler**

MIDYEAR REPORT

**AUSTIN:
HOTTER THAN EVER!**

**ROCK:
ELECTRIFYING
ENTERTAINER!**

**DEBRA:
SHE'S NOT SHY!**

**HUNTER:
HE SOLD OUT!**

**MANKIND:
DEMENTED &
LOVABLE!**

**VINCE:
DOWN BUT NOT OUT!**

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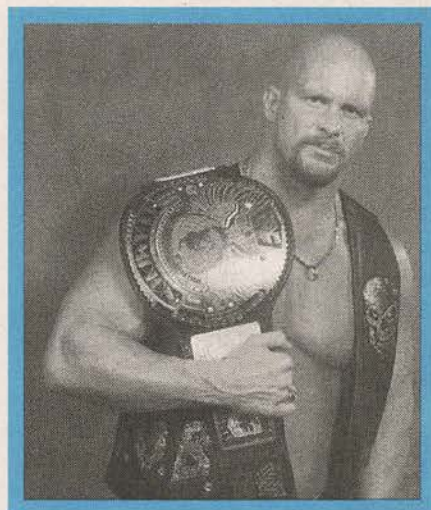
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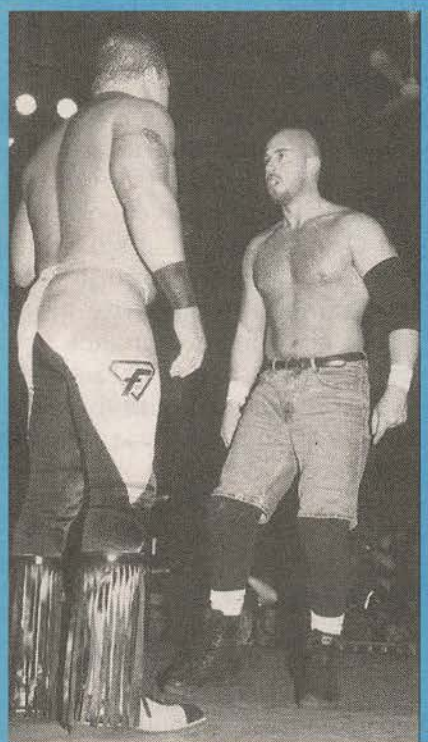
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Next issue on sale July 27, 1999

YOUR Letters

SHERIFF SHAWN

The new WWF sheriff, Shawn Michaels, deserves a gold star on his chest for the role he played in WrestleMania XV. Just when the fans at the First Union Center in Philadelphia and the pay-per-view audience were about to be subjected to another one of Vince McMahon's episodes of, "Let's stack the deck against Steve Austin," Shawn arrived on the scene to put Vince in his place (which is behind the curtain, where he belongs).

It was a World title match, for crying out loud. If The Rock couldn't defend the belt on his

own, then it was time for ownership of the belt to change.

Even when McMahon came back and interfered on The Rock's behalf, he still couldn't get it done. "Stone-Cold" is clearly the better man.

Keep up the good work, HBK; it's time someone stood up to Vince and that wimp he calls a son. There is hope for the WWF as long as Michaels remains the commissioner.

S.K. HODGES
San Antonio, TX

LEAVE TONY ALONE

In his May 1999 "No Holds Barred" column, Steve Anderson

really stretched to find fault with Tony Schiavone.

I really don't think he was being unprofessional when he made a few jokes about *Raw* not being live like *Monday Nitro*. Big deal. The WWF is always making fun of WCW. Why isn't that considered unprofessional? I think people should just leave Schiavone alone. And as for him announcing that Mankind was going to win the title, I know it was a bit uncalled for, but if you're going to be mad at Schiavone, then you should also be mad at the Internet. If you go on any wrestling Web site, you can find out match results and important title changes when they actually happen—often days before the matches are shown on TV.

KIM BIANCO
Boring, MD



Whether Shawn Michaels is in the ring or on the microphone, WWF fans never seem to grow tired of his presence. Reader S.K. Hodges wrote to tell us just how great he thinks Shawn is.

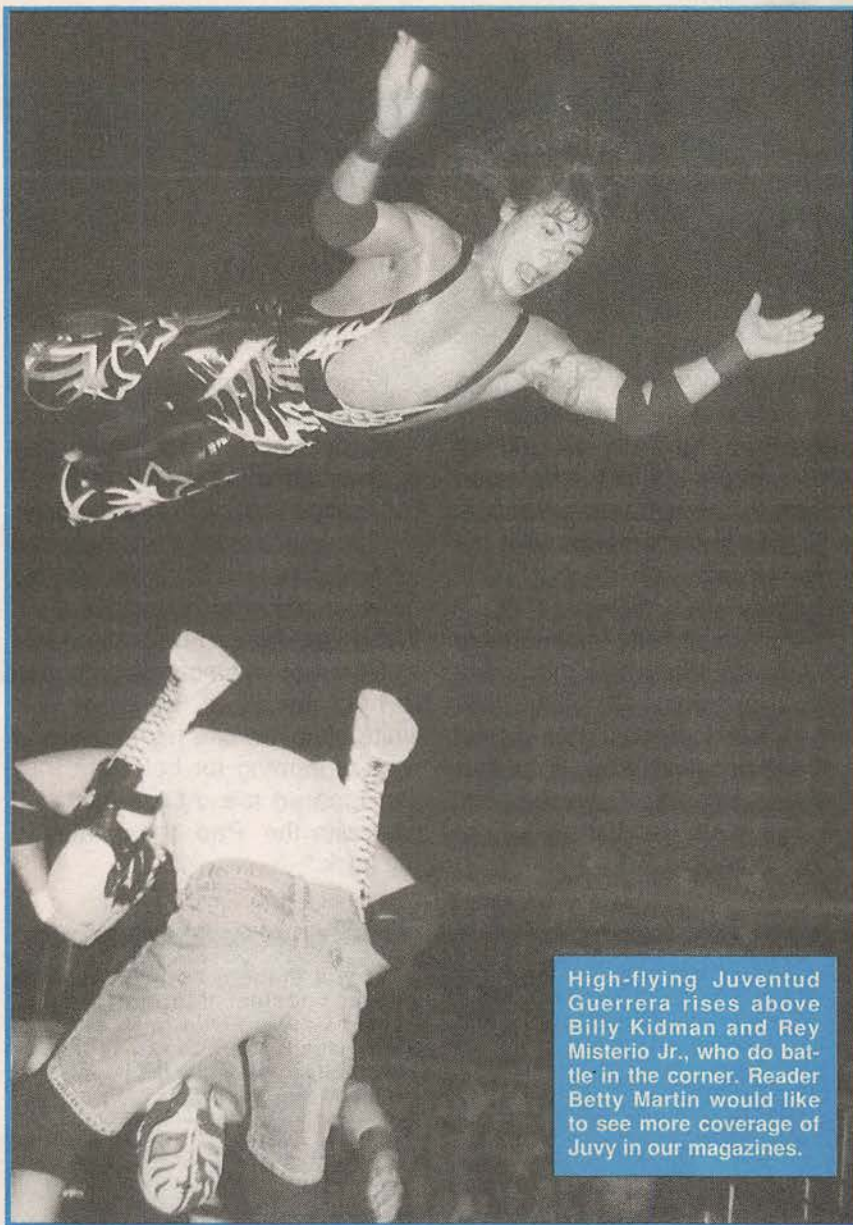
JUVI JUICE

I want to thank you for writing about Juventud Guerrera in the June 1999 issue ("Juventud Guerrera: I'm Not Overlooked ... I'm Overjoyed!"). That story was the only reason I bought the magazine. Please write more about him the next chance you get. There is nearly not enough written about Juvi, and that is a shame, because he is such a great talent.

BETTY MARTIN
Dayton, OH

QUACK-BACKER

I think THE WRESTLER should give some thought to making "From Bell To Bell" by Mike Quackenbush a monthly column rather than printing it every other month.



High-flying Juventud Guerrera rises above Billy Kidman and Rey Mysterio Jr., who do battle in the corner. Reader Betty Martin would like to see more coverage of Juvy in our magazines.

Quackenbush provides excellent insight into the life of a professional wrestler. It is great to see the independent federations represented this way; it's also nice reading about something other than what's going on in WCW or the WWF. I think Mike does a great job. My friends and I wait anxiously every other month for our copies of *THE WRESTLER* to come in the mail just so we can read his column. It should definitely become a monthly feature.

ROB FRENCH
De Kalb, IL

HARDCORE HISTORY

In regard to the subject of injuries in the current wrestling scene, I believe that many wrestlers are taking greater risks for the sake of career development. Of course, this isn't always wise, because a flashy maneuver like the moonsault or a crazy move like falling from 20 feet in the air onto a hard surface can make you not just rich and famous, but also crippled or dead.

Wrestlers have always taken risks. The term "hardcore" might be new, but bloody cage and
(Continued on page 68)

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WHAT'S

Happëning

By Dan Murphy

THE TEMPESTUOUS relationship between **Konnan** and **Kevin Nash** has taken another turn, this time for the better—I think. “Big Sexy” cleared the ring of the **NWO** black and white after they attacked “K-Dogg” at the conclusion of his match with **Horace** on May 3—and now Konnan might actually be thinking about running with the ‘Pac again.

The irony here is that it was Nash who killed Konnan’s megapush back in January by leading an attack on him after the infamous **NWO** reunion. Konnan,

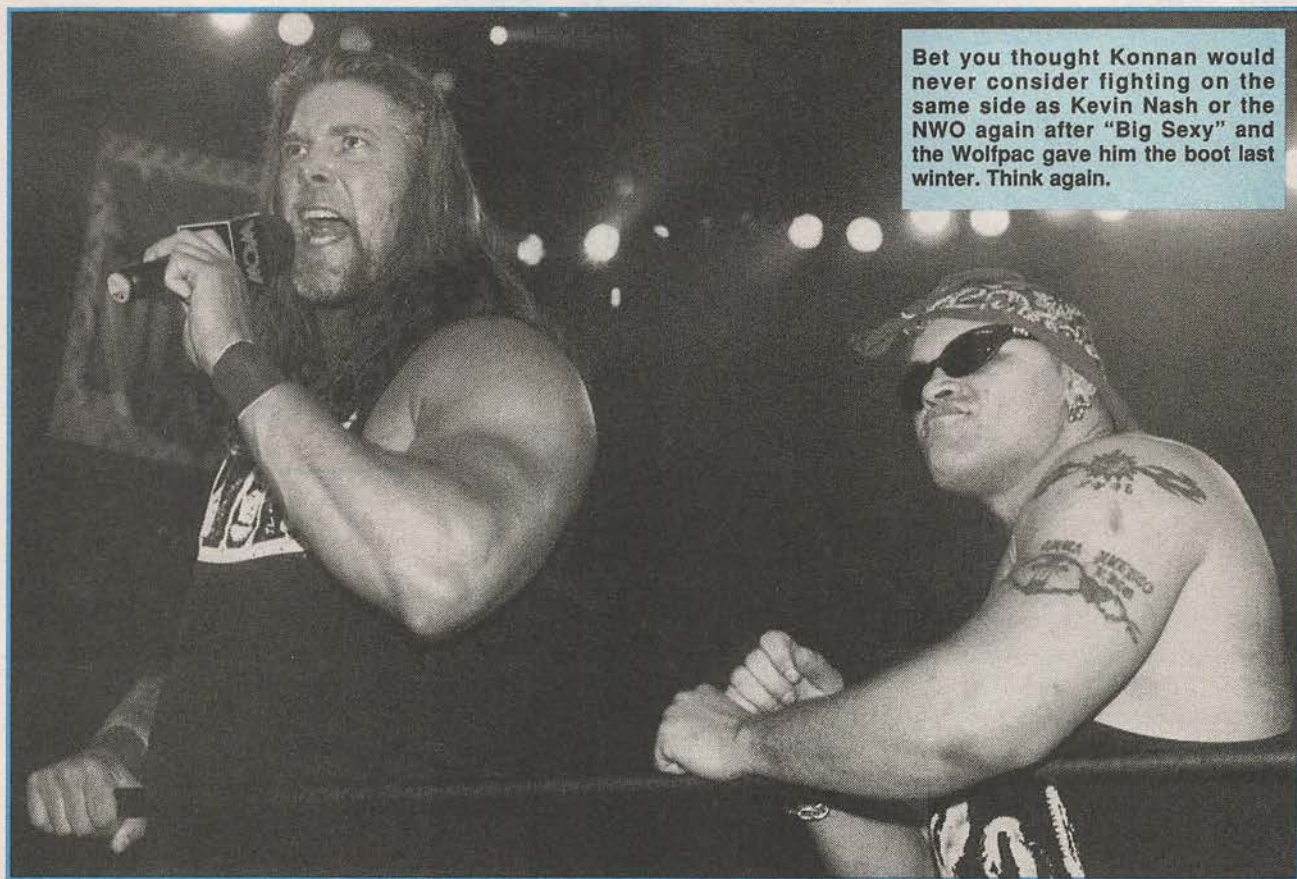
arguably the Wolfpac’s most popular member at the time, suddenly found himself left out of the **NWO**’s plans—and for no good reason. Now it seems Nash is looking to make amends with his former amigo.

But why?

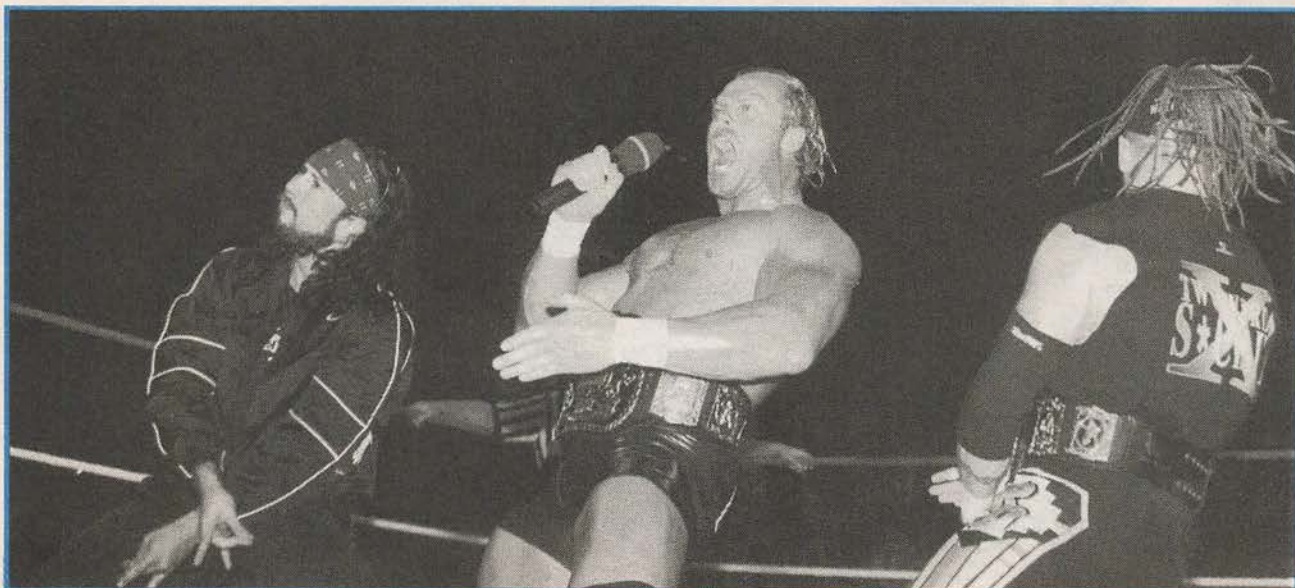
“I was never really comfortable with the way that whole thing went down,” Nash admitted. “Sometimes you’re forced to make a decision that is sound business-wise, but stinks otherwise. Running **Stevie Ray** and those guys off was just my way of saying, ‘Sorry, bro.’”

Konnan acknowledged Nash’s aid with a knock of the fists, but how could he ever forget the way Nash laughed in his face as **Scott Hall** zapped him with a stun gun?

“I’ll never forget that,” Konnan said. “But I’ll also never forget how none of those strawberries from **WCW** came out to help me. And I won’t forget how nobody came out to help me when the black and white almost broke my shoulder. I was screaming for help, but they just ignored me. At least when I was with the ‘Pac, they watched my back.”



Bet you thought Konnan would never consider fighting on the same side as Kevin Nash or the **NWO** again after “Big Sexy” and the Wolfpac gave him the boot last winter. Think again.



At one time, DeGeneration X was the most dominant, tightly knit clique in the WWF, but with great teams come great egos. DX was victimized by the personal goals of its members and their thirst for the spotlight.

After months of threatening to split up, the end finally came for **DeGeneration X** when **Billy Gunn** attacked **X-Pac** after their match on *Raw* in late-April. Gunn's tantrum drew the ire of **Jesse James**, who stood toe-to-toe with his former partner and exchanged right hands with him for 30 seconds.

"That's what happens when everybody wants to be the star," said former DX leader and current WWF Commissioner **Shawn Michaels**. "Everybody wants to be the man in the spotlight, but there's only enough room for one person. A lot of animosity builds up as the weeks and months go by. It's no wonder these guys went at it."

Michaels should know about fighting for the spotlight. He was tested several times by **Hunter Hearst Helmsley**, who felt overshadowed by the charismatic World champ. Similarly, X-Pac felt stifled by Helmsley, as did **Chyna**, before she and "Triple-H" reunited in **The Corporate Ministry**. Exactly how long was the friction growing between Gunn and James?

"I don't know," Michaels admit-

ted. "But I'd bet that 'Road Dogg's' mike work drove Billy crazy after a while. Hell, Jesse stole the show. I mean, Billy started dropping his drawers all over the place. If that ain't a desperate attempt to get attention, I don't know what is."

All-Japan superstar **Mitsuharu Misawa** won his fifth Triple Crown when he pinned **Vader** at the Tokyo Dome on May 2. Sixty-five thousand fans packed the Dome

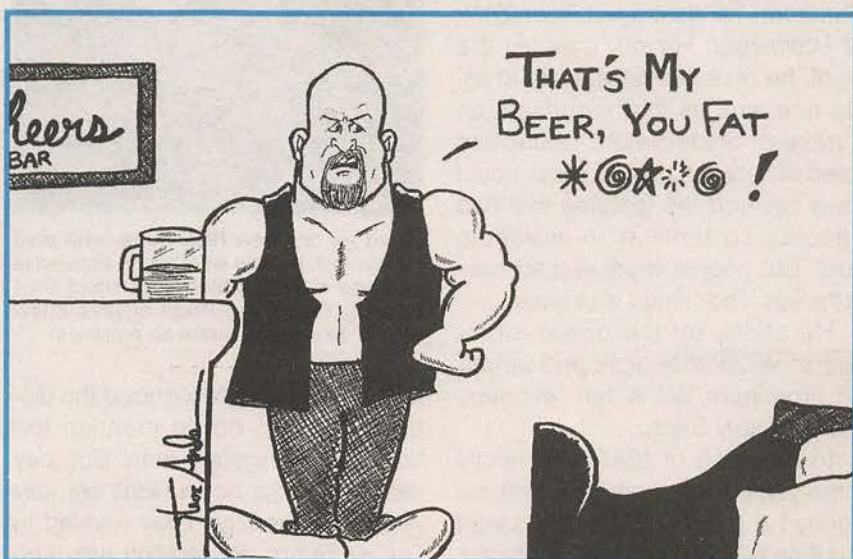
to watch the match and to pay their respects to late All-Japan President **Giant Baba**.

Bruno Sammartino, **Gene Kiniski**, **The Destroyer**, and **Lord Blears** were also on hand at the Giant Baba Memorial Show to eulogize the big man and recall their classic bouts with him.

"I had Baba's spirit in me tonight," Misawa said after his win. "I hope he is proud."

(Continued on page 69)

Steve Anderson's View



NO Holds Barred

with Steve Anderson

"RAVISHING" RICK RUDE always knew how to make an entrance.

He took two long sabbaticals during his wrestling career. The first began when he left the WWF in 1990 and lasted until he made his WCW debut in 1991. The second began when he suffered what turned out to be a career-ending injury in Japan in 1994 and lasted until he began showing up in ECW in early-1997. During those long absences, he was still on the minds of wrestling fans, many of whom often asked, "When is Rick Rude coming back?"

In October 1991, after a year-long absence, Rick Rude entered WCW. As the masked Halloween Phantom, he destroyed Tom Zenk at Halloween Havoc. Later in the night, he revealed his identity to all. No one was all that surprised, as rumors of his imminent return had been circulating, and no mask could have covered the features that had become so familiar to wrestling fans. But people were excited nevertheless. Rick Rude was back.

He shook up the power structure of WCW that night and targeted prominent WCW fan favorites, most notably Sting.

In the winter of 1997, after nearly three years away from the sport, he donned a hood in ECW. His target this time was Shane Douglas. Again,



When we last saw Rick Rude, who died on April 20, he was wearing an expensive suit and advising his good friend Curt Hennig. One thing Rude always knew how to do well was make an entrance.

fans immediately recognized the distinct features, not to mention the voice of the mystery man. But they didn't care that he wouldn't officially reveal his identity. They reveled in Rude's return. By feuding with and

subsequently joining Douglas, Rude again shook up the power structure in a major wrestling organization.

His other two entrances over the past two years were equally surprising. First he came to the WWF to be a bodyguard for the original DeGeneration X. Then, in November 1997, he pulled his biggest shocker to date when he showed up with the NWO on a live *Nitro*. Keep in mind that on the same night he entered WCW, he was appearing on a taped *Raw*. If that weren't enough, Rude also appeared on ECW television over the weekend.

Though his entrances were usually very noisy, his exits were almost understated. He left the WWF (twice), ECW, and WCW quietly. No farewell tributes. No going away speeches.

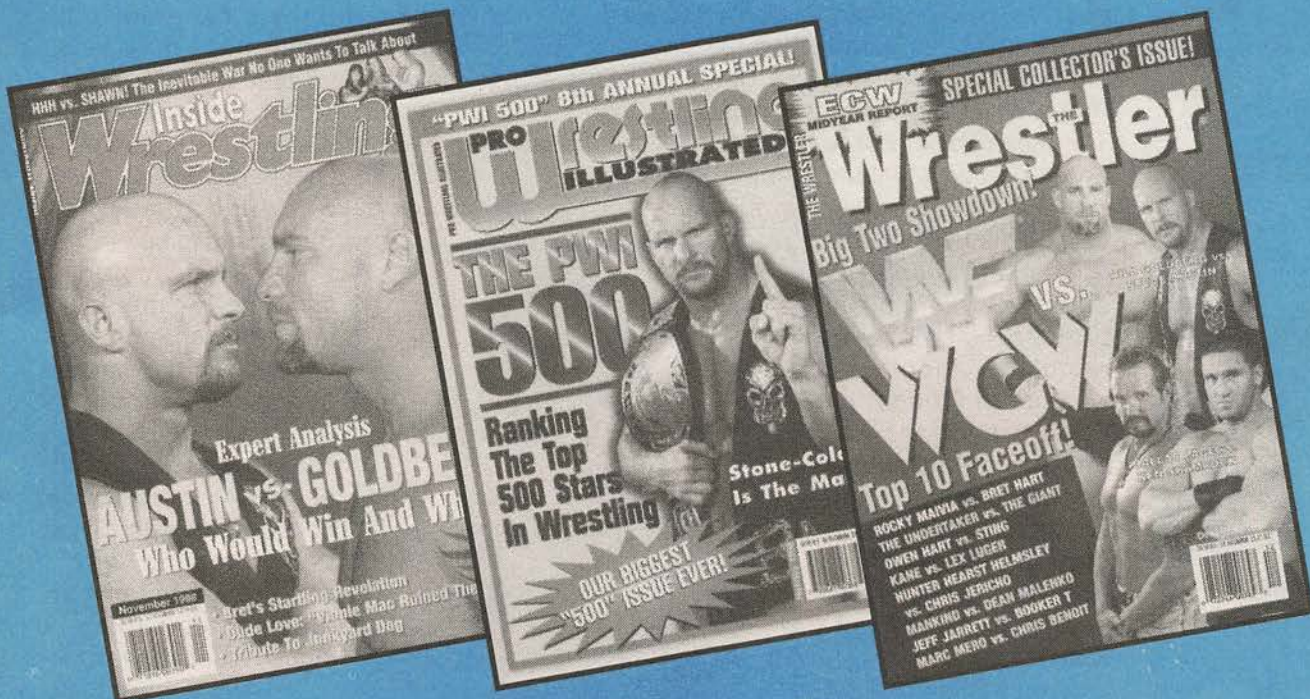
By now you probably know that on April 20, 1999, Rick Rude died at the age of 40. We never got to say goodbye to him. He disappeared from WCW TV without anyone really noticing.

Rude left behind a wife, three children, and a lot of friends in the wrestling industry. Just as those that died before him, that is the biggest tragedy of all. Professional wrestling has gone on without Rick Rude. But his family and friends will forever struggle with the loss.

(Continued on page 72)

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By
Harry
Burkett

DON'T SOCIALIZE with wrestlers very often. I'd rather receive an assignment, go straight to the source or sources, then write the story. Many members of the staff of THE WRESTLER have enjoyed friendly relationships with some big names over the years and still manage to maintain their objectivity. I don't take that risk.

That's why I was surprised when I got a call from Mankind, apparently just to chat. During the previous evening's *Sunday Night Heat*, he had taken a brutal beating from the newly formed Corporate Ministry. Shane McMahon had locked the doors of the boiler room at the San Diego Sports Arena while Big Bossman, The Acolytes, The Mean Street Posse, and others kicked and stomped Mankind's crumpled body. Paul Wight finally tore open the doors and cleared the boiler room.

Mankind didn't talk about his bumps and bruises. Instead, he rambled about the weather in Florida, the rising cost of neckties, and the great taste of certain canned pasta products. It was meandering, bordering on pointless. Yet I was flattered that he thought I would care.

Even if I didn't.

I was about to find a polite way to end the conversation when Mankind asked, "Want to guess where I went last night?" It was in a childish tone of voice, like a naughty boy begging to get caught.

Not only did I take the bait, I choked on the hook.

"Where?" I asked.

"Have you ever wondered where the Smack Down Hotel really is?" pressed Mankind.

I knew exactly where it was. It was located in The Rock's deluded mind, between paranoia and delusions of grandeur.

"Man, it was tough to find," Mankind continued. "I drove around for hours until I found this highway in San Diego. For some reason it wasn't on the map. It's called Know Your Role Boulevard, and it was real neat because there was Bossman, showing

a chain gang how to pick up bottles, plastic, trash, you name it. I kept on driving and there was a McDonald's. The window looked like somebody threw a boulder through it. Anyway, I looked to my right and there it was: Jabroni Drive!

"Boy, they gave that street the right name! Nothing but jabronis everywhere—on park benches, standing on the curb, hitching rides. I saw Michael Bolton, New Kids on the Block, and Cpl. Kirschner! So many jabronis I couldn't see straight."

I was being dragged into Mankind's world. I knew clicking my heels three times wouldn't get me out, either.

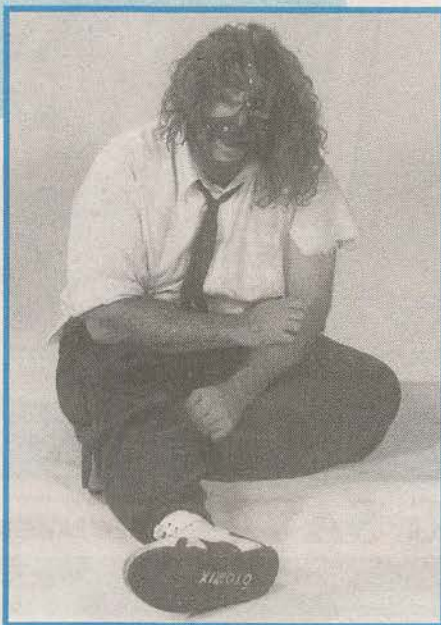
"Then, directly to my left-hand side, I saw Candy [Butt] Lane. There was Billy Gunn sucking on a peppermint stick. I was getting closer. I knew the Roody-Poo

Bridge had to be straight ahead. But I couldn't find it. I saw a guy carrying a newspaper, so I rolled down the window and asked, 'Sir, where is that confounded bridge?' He pointed north-east, and there was a rickety old bridge. Since there was no way I could drive my car on that decrepit thing, I jogged stealthily across.

"Lo and behold, there it was! The Smack Down Hotel! I ran inside, but no one was at the front desk. The elevator didn't work, so I went up the steps to the third floor, ran down the hallway, and noticed

one of the doors ajar. It was room 316. I pushed the door open, and you won't believe what I saw! Steve Austin was there with The Rock and Vince McMahon. They had opened a window and were yelling at someone. I crept behind them and peered outside. It was The Undertaker and Shane McMahon inside a crane with a wrecking ball and laughing like maniacs!"

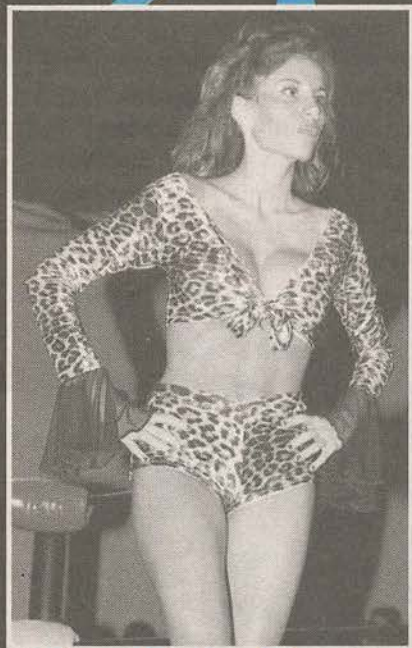
I almost asked Mankind whether he had been hit on the head during The Corporate Ministry's attack the night before. Then I thought about what he said. I realized the craziest prophecies often make the most sense. I thanked Mankind and told him to call me again sometime. □



Strange trip for Mankind

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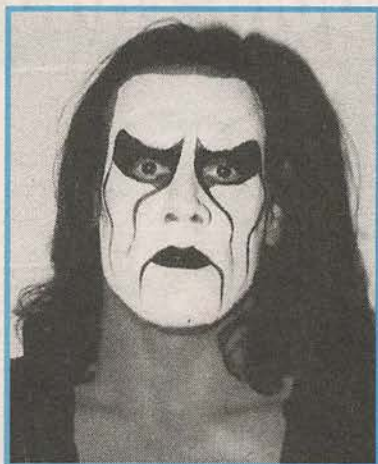
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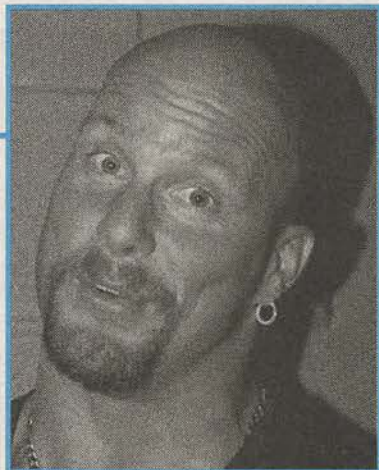
Thumbs Up to Sting. He has been a man of few words over the past few years, maybe because he knows action speaks louder than words. He celebrated his return to *Nitro* by challenging WCW President Ric Flair to a match, then beating him with his scorpion deathdrop, despite Arn Anderson's attempted interference. We've never had any doubt that if Sting put his mind to it, and forgot about the grudges that often sideline him, he'd be the best wrestler in the world. When he talks—which isn't that often—people listen. When he wrestles, it's time to watch. Once again, Sting is among the hottest stars in the sport.

Thumbs Up to Sable. Yeah, the success of her recent *Playboy* shoot might have gone straight to her head, but that's okay, because the majority of her male fans don't look there anyway. And speaking of Sable's male fans, here's some great news for them. Sable announced on *Raw* that she will be appearing in a second *Playboy* layout. This issue isn't expected to be out until sometime next year, so in the meantime, Sable can keep her female fans satisfied by defending the WWF women's title regularly. A beautiful woman who can wrestle and isn't afraid to give the fans what they want. Now that's what we call the real "Total Package."

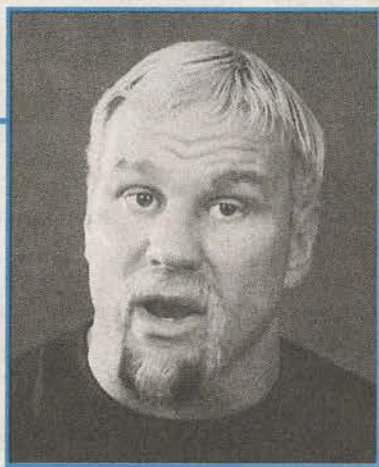


Thumbs Up to Dallas Page. Congratulations to DDP on winning his first WCW World title. Sure, he won it under dubious circumstances. Special referee Randy Savage got involved in the four-way match involving Page, Ric Flair, Sting, and Hollywood Hogan, and delivered a top-robe elbow on Flair, the champ. With Hogan already eliminated and all three others on their backs, Page got up, scored with a Diamond cutter on Flair, and pinned him. Maybe the old Page wouldn't have taken advantage of the situation, but then again, the old DDP never won the World title. Several years ago, Page was nearly penniless. Now his riches-to-rags-to-riches story is complete.

Thumbs Up to Steve Austin. He's a "Stone-Cold" television superstar! Coming off his ratings-busting performance on CBS' *Nash Bridges*, which drew a larger audience than the ABC and NBC offerings the week Austin appeared on the show, Austin has been signed to appear on another episode of the show. Considering Austin's drawing power, we wouldn't be surprised if the producers decided to make him a regular character, although we hope they don't. Austin is one of the finest wrestlers in the world, and the most popular, too. Austin's success on prime time TV makes us wonder how *Raw* would do on a network in prime time. Maybe Vince McMahon is wondering the same thing.

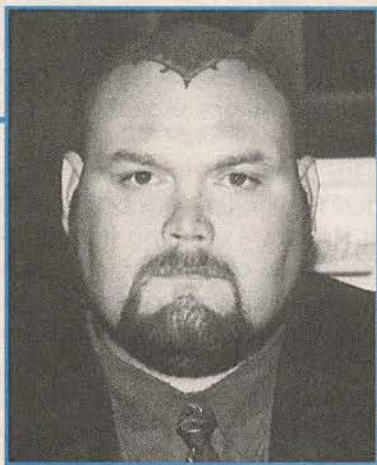


THUMB B S Down



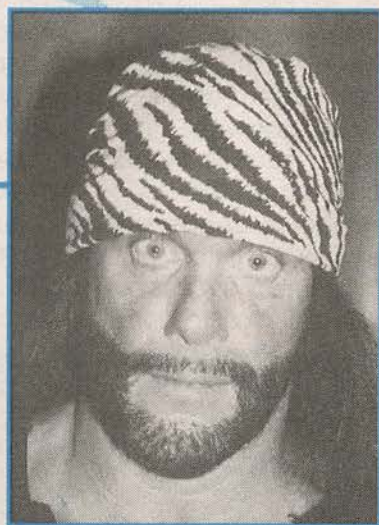
Thumbs Down to Scott Steiner. What a jerk! He's nothing but a walking time bomb, a man who loves to insult and inflame people. Not only did "Big Poppa Pump" steal the U.S. title by striking Booker T with a foreign object in the tournament final, but he nearly started a mini-riot by antagonizing some of the fans at the Tacoma Dome. "Ain't nothing like winning a title in front of a bunch of stupid rednecks," he said. "I hate Washington anyway, especially Tacoma." Scott Steiner basically has no respect for anybody. Therefore, we have no respect for Scott Steiner.

Thumbs Down to Randy Savage. First of all, WCW gets what it deserves when it names an unstable man like the "Macho Man" guest referee for a World title match, especially a four-corners bout involving Ric Flair, Dallas Page, Hollywood Hogan, and Sting. Nobody was surprised when Savage delivered a top-roped elbow on Flair during the match. It was bound to happen. But let's face facts here. Let's not lay all the blame on WCW. Savage is a grown man. He's a 26-year veteran of the ring. Couldn't he have been mature enough to referee the match properly? Guess not. As a result, the WCW World title has been tainted again. Maybe that was Savage's objective all along.



Thumbs Down to Bam Bam Bigelow. Unable to win major titles or dominate his feud with Bill Goldberg, "The Beast From The East" has taken to spraying a woman with a fire extinguisher. His target was Chastity, who got a crotch full of chemicals when she tried to interfere on Hardcore Hak's behalf at Spring Stampede. "The sooner you eliminate her, the better," Bigelow said after the match. *Hmmmmmm* ... is Bigelow saying he'd be unable to deal with Chastity if she started causing too much trouble? We're not condoning Chastity's interference in Hak's matches of late, but Bigelow didn't need to use the fire extinguisher on her to prove he's a hardcore superstar.

Thumbs Down to Vince McMahon. The WWF owner might be a genius, as Jerry Lawler contends, but he's also a control freak. The Bible tells us we must reap what we sow, and right now, that's something Mr. McMahon is unable to do. He created The Corporation. He got DeGeneration X angry. He incited The Undertaker to form The Ministry. And now that he can't control any of these groups, he wants to tear them down. "Mr. McMahon does not appreciate ingratitude," Gerald Brisco said. We're sure he doesn't. But if McMahon insists on taking on all three groups, it's only a matter of time before the only meaningful WWF feud is McMahon against the world. Who wants to see that?



CORRESPONDENTS

Repörrts

Providence, RI (Correspondent—Dutch Krewda): Ken Shamrock used a full arsenal of submission holds and takedowns, but his technical skills weren't quite formidable enough to propel him to a win over The Undertaker at Backlash. Right from the opening bell, Shamrock went after Undertaker with a barrage of armbars, knee-bars, and leglocks. Undertaker remained unfazed, though, and stopped Shamrock with a kick to the face. Shamrock was able to retaliate with a huracanrana, but he was still

dazed from the kick.

Shamrock eventually went for his anklelock, but The Undertaker did his best to block it. As Shamrock tried to cinch the hold on tighter, Bradshaw came to the ring with a baseball bat, so Shamrock unlocked his grasp on The Undertaker and attacked him. When Shamrock tried to return his attentions to 'Taker, Paul Bearer jumped up onto the ring apron. After chasing Bearer, Shamrock executed a belly-to-belly suplex on The Undertaker. Shamrock then went for a tombstone piledriver, but The Undertaker reversed it and finished off his foe with his signature move.

In other bouts: **In matches broadcast on Sunday Night Heat:** Val Venis defeated D-Lo Brown & Ivory in a handicap match after Nicole Bass interfered ... Prince Albert & Droz beat Brian Christopher & Scott Taylor ... Kane beat Big Bossman ... Viscera defeated Test ... **In pay-per-view matches:** Bradshaw, Faarooq, & Midian defeated The Brood when Bradshaw pinned Christian ... Al Snow beat Bob Holly for the WWF hardcore title ... WWF Intercontinental champion The Godfather pinned Goldust ... Billy Gunn & Jesse James defeated Owen Hart & Jeff Jarrett ... Mankind defeated Paul Wight in a boiler room brawl ... Hunter

Hearst Helmsley pinned X-Pac ... WWF World champion Steve Austin pinned The Rock.

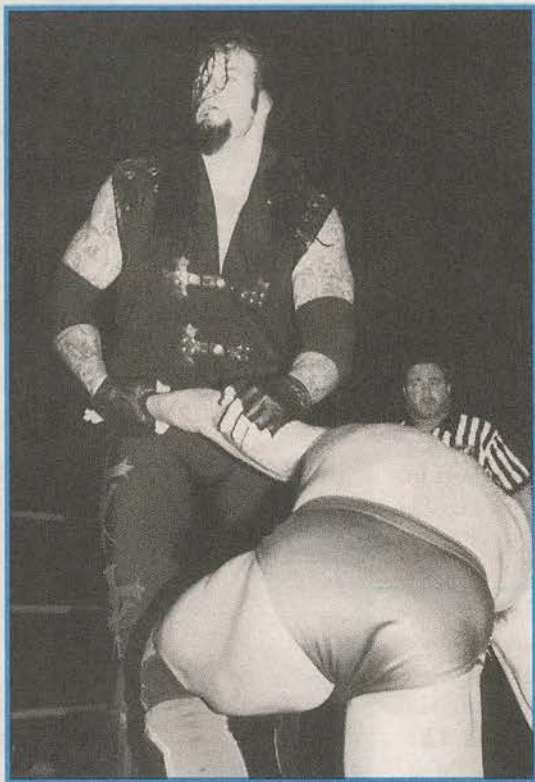
Danbury, CT (Correspondent—Timothy A. Walker): Tommy Rogers faced off against the self-proclaimed "King Of The Independents," Reckless Youth, in one of the featured bouts on this Northeast Wrestling card. Youth was accompanied to the ring by manager Paul Adams.

Youth, who claimed he was a karate expert before the match, was hesitant to lock up with the more experienced Rogers at the beginning of the match. Rogers immediately tied up Youth, and Reckless grabbed the ropes. When Rogers didn't release his grip, both Youth and Adams protested to the referee.

The pace of the match then began to pick up, with both Youth and Rogers executing lightning-quick moves on each other. Youth grabbed an advantage when he took Rogers down to the mat with a spinning headscissors. He then tried to choke out Rogers, but the referee forced Reckless to release his grip on Rogers' throat. Youth, however, continued to use a lot of high-impact flying moves and to break the rules—especially when his manager distracted the ref—to maintain control of the match.

At one point, Youth knocked Rogers out of the ring and onto the floor. Reckless proved he was indeed just that—reckless—when he dove headfirst out of the ring and on

(Continued on page 76)



The Undertaker tries to mount an offense against Ken Shamrock during their match at WWF Backlash. Shamrock controlled the match with a bevy of technical moves, but he could not defeat "The Lord Of Darkness."

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YOU Asked Us

Q: "I have a question for Bret Hart: Bret, why did you quit WCW?"
—Jennifer Dawson, Richmond, VA

A: "If you've been watching *Nitro* and *Thunder*, you would have noticed that the WCW match-makers have been putting me out there against mid-card bums and scrubs who aren't even good enough to carry my jock," he replied. "At this point in my career, after all that I've accomplished, I don't think I deserve to

be treated like that. I'm a five-time World champion, and a three-time U.S. champion. That should count for something, right? Well, it doesn't mean anything in the WCW. I've always said that I came to the WCW to earn a reputation, not lose one. But I've been continually looked over by the Executive Committee for title shots, while nobodies like Goldberg, who I flattened in front of the world, and losers like Sting and Dallas Page get pushed. You know, I came in here and wiped the mat with Ric Flair, who's supposed to be a legend around WCW. And I've waited and waited to wrestle Hollywood Hogan, but for some reason the match has never been signed. So you know what? I'm tired of waiting. When the WCW feels like showing me the respect I deserve, maybe I'll come back. In the meantime, I'll be home watching hockey."

...

Q: "I have a question for Debra: On a recent episode of *Raw*, you demonstrated an obvious attraction to Val Venis, who's dumped every woman he's come in contact with in the WWF. Why would a beautiful and successful woman like you want anything to do with an insensitive womanizer like him?"—Amy Pollard, Huntington Beach, CA

A: "In order for me to remain successful, honey, I have to attract new talent all the time," Debra

explained. "And now that Jeff and Owen have lost the tag team title, I need to look ahead to bigger things. As far as I can tell, Val Venis is the best young wrestler out there right now. He's strong, he's ambitious, and believe me, baby, he is most definitely on the rise. Nothing is official right now, but if I get my way, I'm going hitch my cart to that stud, honey, and ride him all the way to the bank! And if it doesn't work out, oh, well, I'll just move on to the next project."

...

Q: "I would like to ask Jerry Lynn two questions: Jerry, why did you refuse the ECW TV title when referee John Finnegan was ready to give it to you, and do you regret not accepting the belt?"—Freddie Price, New York, NY

A: "I've never regretted anything I've done in the ring for a single moment, least of all what I did at the Living Dangerously pay-per-view," said Lynn. "What I tried to do by asking for overtime was establish myself as a top tier wrestler in ECW by beating a champ, in this case Van Dam, on the mat, either by pinfall or submission. Anything less convincing than physical victory just doesn't count to me. Who ever heard of a wrestler being awarded the title on a decision? This isn't boxing. Let's face it, in wrestling, it's a win, a loss, or a draw. Anything

(Continued on page 77)

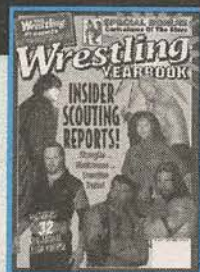


Bret Hart has been very critical of WCW for not pushing him into title contention, and rightfully so. But does a champion simply quit, as Bret has, when things get tough?

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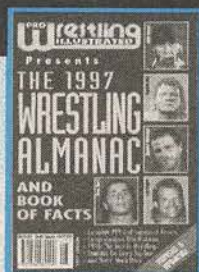
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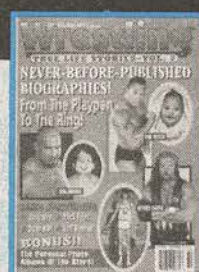
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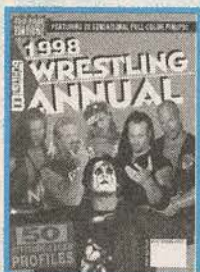
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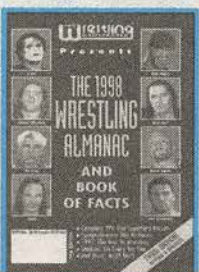
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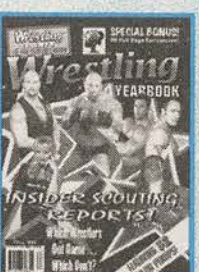
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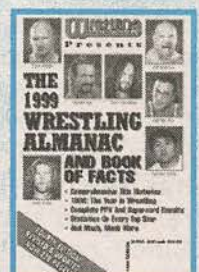
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Introducing

ROMEO BLISS

By Harry Burkett

ROMEO BLISS ISN'T a man one would expect to come from the good 'ol South. Not unless you're talking about a filthy rich plantation owner or a smooth-talking snake oil salesman. To be sure, Romeo has problems connecting with the average man.

"My main objective is to be the best and have nothing but the best," Bliss explained. "I live in the biggest house on the biggest hill on the swingingest side of town because life is about having women at my side and title belts around my waist. Money in my pocket is just an added bonus."

That's some cocky talk coming from a competitor with only three years invested in the sport. But he has the win-loss record and resume to support his boasts. Since his debut against The Patriot in January 1996, Bliss has claimed the Ultimate Championship Wrestling heavyweight, Appalachian Mountain Southeastern, Tennessee Championship Wrestling heavyweight, Southern Championship Wrestling United States, and Southern Wrestling Alliance TV titles. He has also captured the Mountain Empire and SCW Southern tag championships.

But Romeo, oh Romeo, art thou as great as thou say?

"Do you know many men who are invited to the Kentucky Derby to witness the greatest two minutes in sports, then spend a week of leisure at the Brown Hotel in Louisville, sipping mint juleps and surrounded by gorgeous women?" he asked.



Despite his romantic name, Romeo Bliss has done little to woo Southern fans. In fact, the only time they cheer him is when he's taking a beating. If and when Bliss gains a national reputation, he is sure to become more arrogant than ever

No, not exactly. But we really weren't looking for any.

The 28-year-old obviously suffers from a superiority complex ... and his success in the ring isn't helping that condition one bit.

Bliss has an intense determination that matches his unbridled arrogance. He placed second in the Volunteer State Bodybuilding Show in 1991. He won the Kentucky/Tennessee Power Lifting Competition for 1991-92 in the pound-for-pound category.

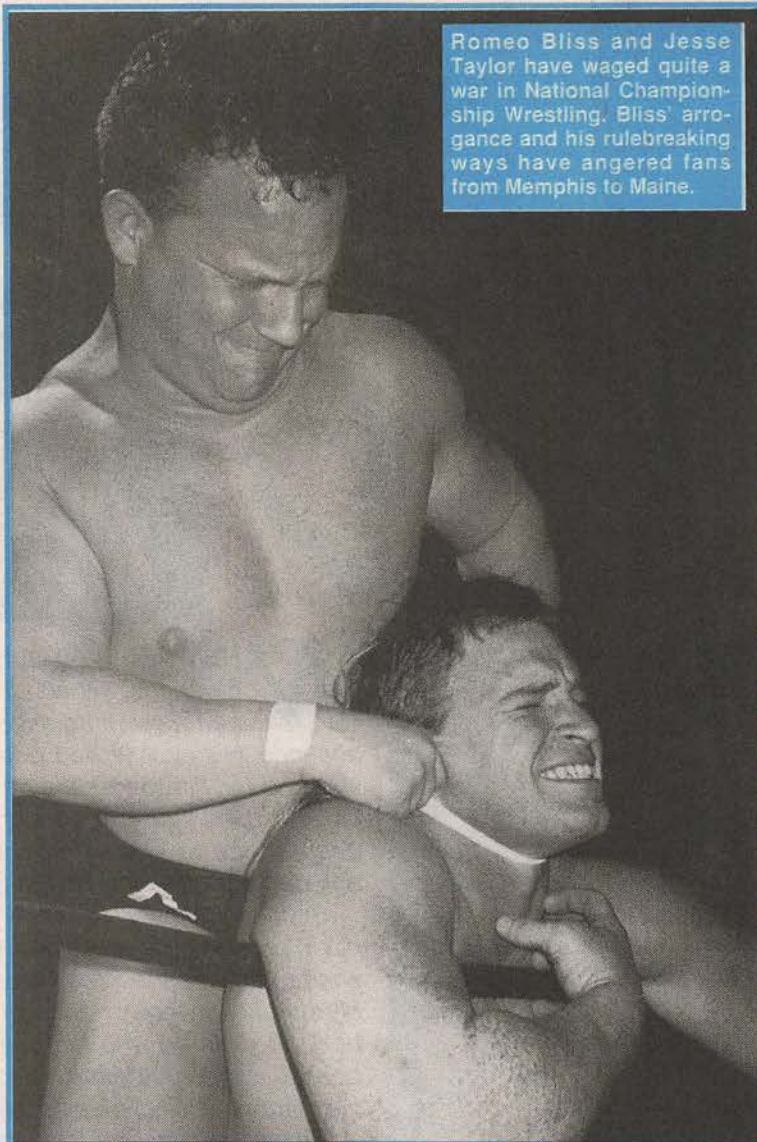
The Tennessean also played under head coach Bruce Snyder at Arizona State University as an outside linebacker. He had a promising future until a knee injury dashed his gridiron career.

His enormous ego needed something to satisfy its competitive fire. He grew up watching wrestling on his grandfather's knee and admiring NWA stars such as Ric Flair, Roddy Piper, and the Andersons. Wrestling, he figured, could give him fame, women, money, and everything else he wanted.

Yet Bliss still needed a key ingredient: wrestling skills.

Bliss made lots of phone calls until he discovered The Young Guns. Jeff Lovin and Scott Sterling were the hottest team touring the Southern indies at the time and also were highly regarded trainers. A mutual respect developed between the egomaniac and the country boys.

To Lovin and Sterling's dismay, Bliss soon added something to his



Romeo Bliss and Jesse Taylor have waged quite a war in National Championship Wrestling. Bliss' arrogance and his rulebreaking ways have angered fans from Memphis to Maine.

repertoire that hadn't been taught in training school: dirty tricks. He fought his mentors throughout American Championship Wrestling for several months, either individually or in tag matches. "I went out to beat the best," he said. "That's why I went after Lovin and Sterling."

Bliss signed for matches against all the big names he could, including Buddy Landell, Jimmy Valiant, Tony Anthony, Tim Horner, and The Rock 'n' Roll Express. Even those veterans had difficulty against Bliss' versatility.

The 6', 231-pounder can grapple effectively on the mat, or he can surprise foes with high-impact moves. His piledriver, dubbed the heartbreaker, is his most devastat-

ing weapon. Bliss leaps high into the air and lands with such force that his opponent's head bounces off the mat.

One man has been on the receiving end of the heartbreaker more than most. His name is Jesse Taylor. His war with Bliss is still raging in National Championship Wrestling. It intensified recently when Bliss, hoping to earn a shot at NCW champ Thunder, defeated Taylor. Then Taylor rebounded to beat Eddie Golden for the NCW U.S. title.

The new champ granted a title shot to Bliss, who lost in the attempt. Bliss not only failed to win the U.S. belt, but also lost his chance to wrestle for the NCW heavyweight title. Infuriated, he hired a behemoth named Ruckus, who

defeated Taylor handily. Ruckus then handed Bliss the NCW U.S. belt.

When Bliss isn't wreaking havoc in the South, he's venturing to the Northeast to stir up trouble. He has made regular appearances in the NWA, including at last year's Eddie Gilbert Memorial Brawl.

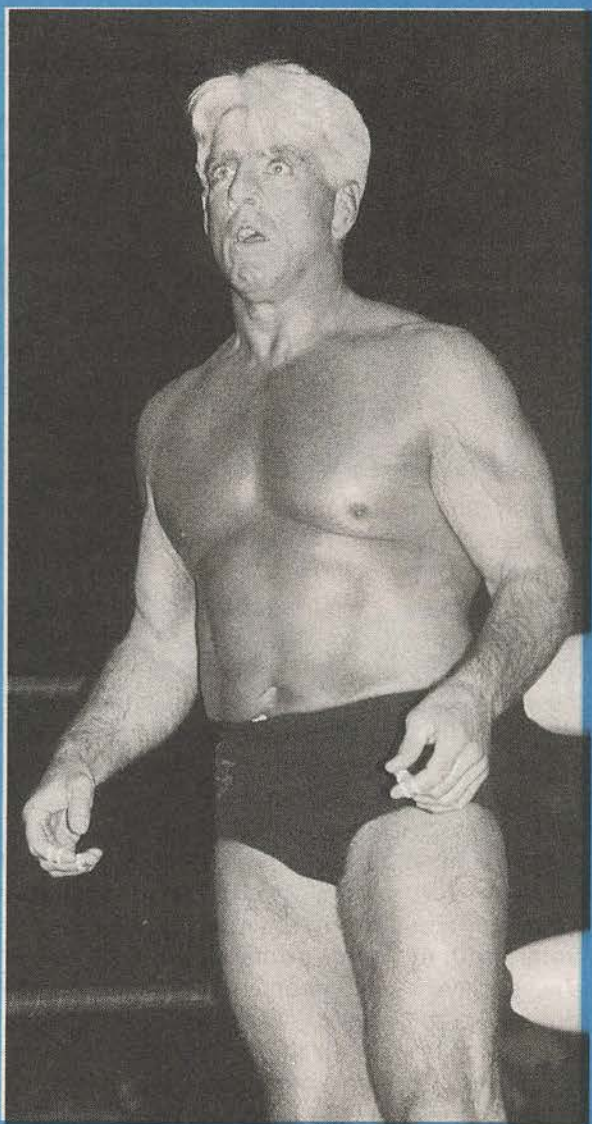
"I told you—I'm in wrestling for the glamour, the babes, and the cash," said Bliss. "If I have to hop on my private plane to make an engagement, that's just fine. Whether I've got to travel to the NWA, WCW, or the WWF, I'll do it. What the world needs is a sweet taste of this Southern heartthrob."

Do Eric and Vince like mint juleps? □

Q

RIC FLAIR

A



WHEN RIC FLAIR returned to WCW last fall, he told us he was humbled by the support he received from fans during his five-month absence. His eyes welled with tears anytime the fans cheered for him and chanted his name. Those fans inspired him during his feud with Eric Bischoff and pushed him to unseat Bischoff as WCW president and defeat Hollywood Hogan for his 14th world title.

Suddenly, Flair was one of the most powerful people in professional wrestling. He was the WCW World champ, he was the WCW president, and he was visibly drunk with power and control. While holding the belt, he dictated who his challengers would be and booked dangerous matches for his rivals. He abused his office and his championship status.

Power corrupted Flair—there's no doubt about that. He became the "Nature Boy" of old. He was arrogant and egotistical. He was lashing out at the fans that he once embraced. The tears in his eyes had dried. The humility was replaced by seething hatred for fans and opponents.

In the course of eight days, the "Nature Boy's" power trip came to a screeching halt. At Spring Stampede, "Diamond" Dallas Page pinned him in a four-way bout for the World title. Eight days later on **Nitro**, he was committed to a mental institution for psychiatric evaluation. Roddy Piper and Ric's son David felt the former champ's actions were symptomatic of a breakdown.

Senior Writer Steve Anderson had the opportunity to sit down with Ric Flair hours after his release from a Florida mental hospital. "The fact that he got released didn't surprise me," recalled Anderson. "Despite all he had been through, he was very calm, collected, and deliberate in what he said. But underneath it all was a ticking time bomb waiting to explode."

Q: Ric, I can only imagine what the past few days have been like for you.

A: First of all, that's *President Flair* to you, Anderson. Second, how can you possibly imagine what I've been through? The humiliation. The degradation. What a man of my stature had to go through was absolutely unacceptable. They treated me like a crazy man. Do I look crazy to you, pal?

Q: Well, I just think that Roddy Piper and your son David were looking out for your well-being and that of WCW.

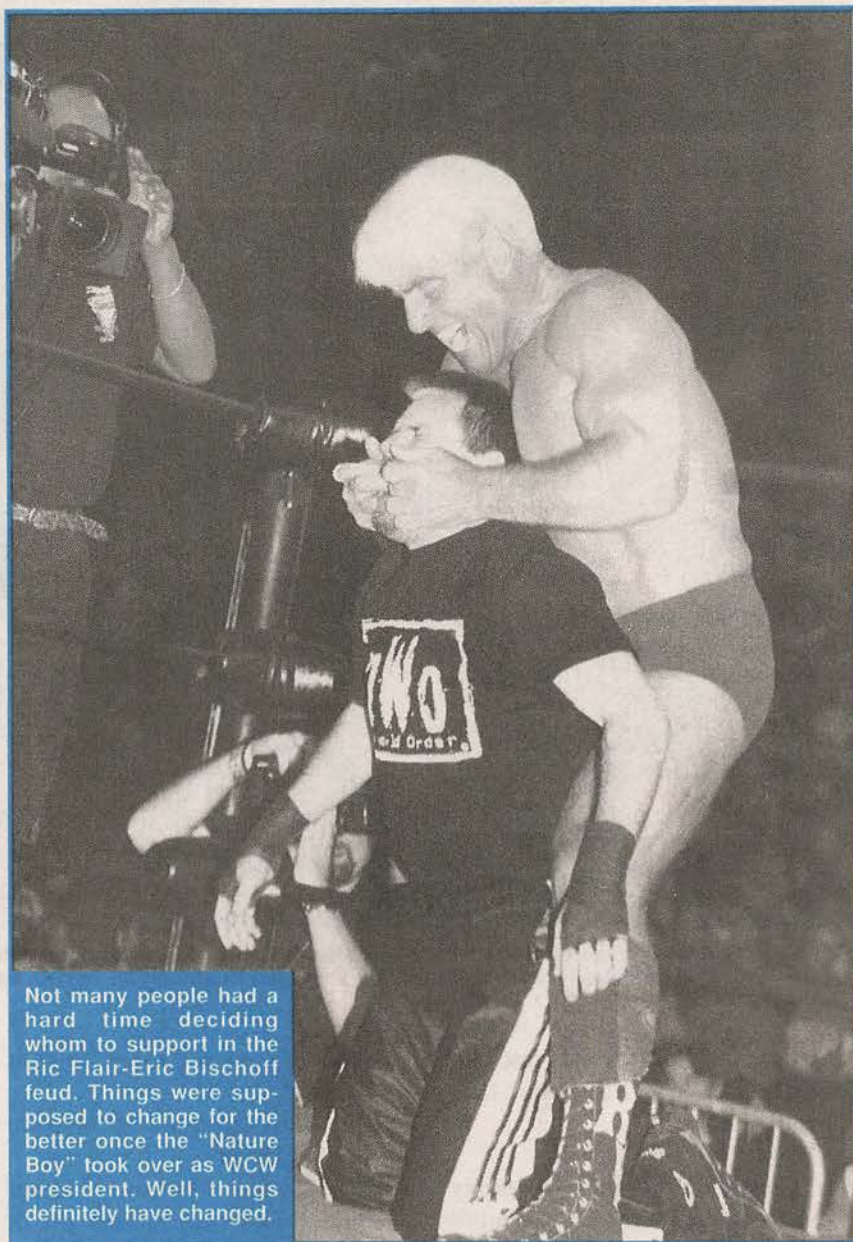
A: Are you out of your mind? Maybe you should spend some time in that rubber room, Anderson. Piper was, is, and always will be a nobody; he's a "Nature Boy" wannabe on his best day. He's so consumed with jealousy over my success that he has to resort to underhanded tactics and poisoning the mind of my son.

Q: But looking at their side, your actions as of late have been a bit strange.

A: Strange? So not only are you a hack writer, but now you're some dime-store psychologist? If anyone could understand the pressure of being a world champion *and* the president of a big company like WCW, then they should step forward now. Not you, not Piper, and certainly not David can understand what I'm going through. On top of all that, "Diamond" Dallas Page steals my title in the luckiest match of his career. Now they want me diagnosed as mentally incompetent. Well, no one is more competent than the "Nature Boy."

Q: What about the fans? For so long, you had a strong bond with them, and now you are quick to anger when it comes to them.

A: The fans. Ah, yes, those grateful fans. For a quarter of a century, I have given my blood, sweat,



Not many people had a hard time deciding whom to support in the Ric Flair-Eric Bischoff feud. Things were supposed to change for the better once the "Nature Boy" took over as WCW president. Well, things definitely have changed.

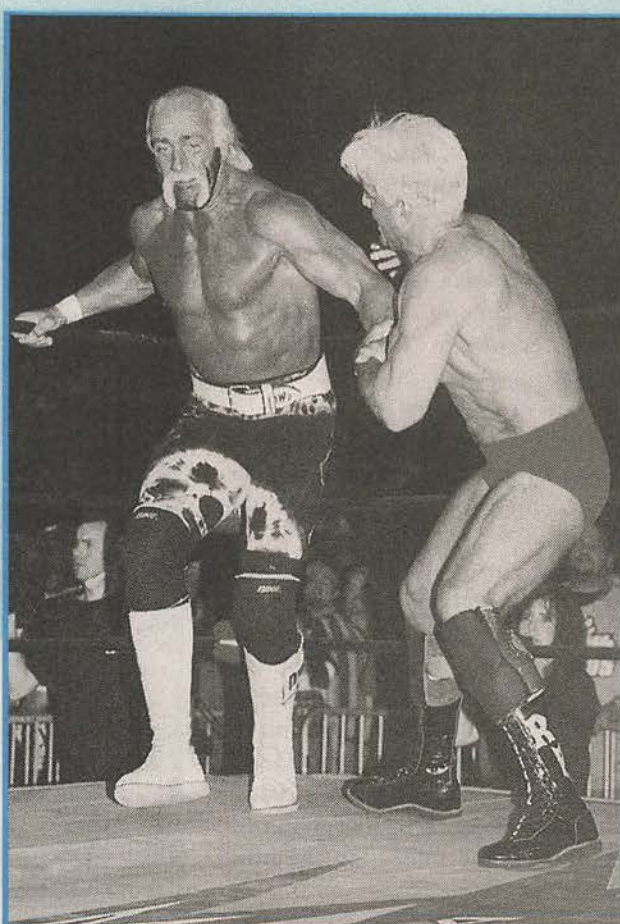
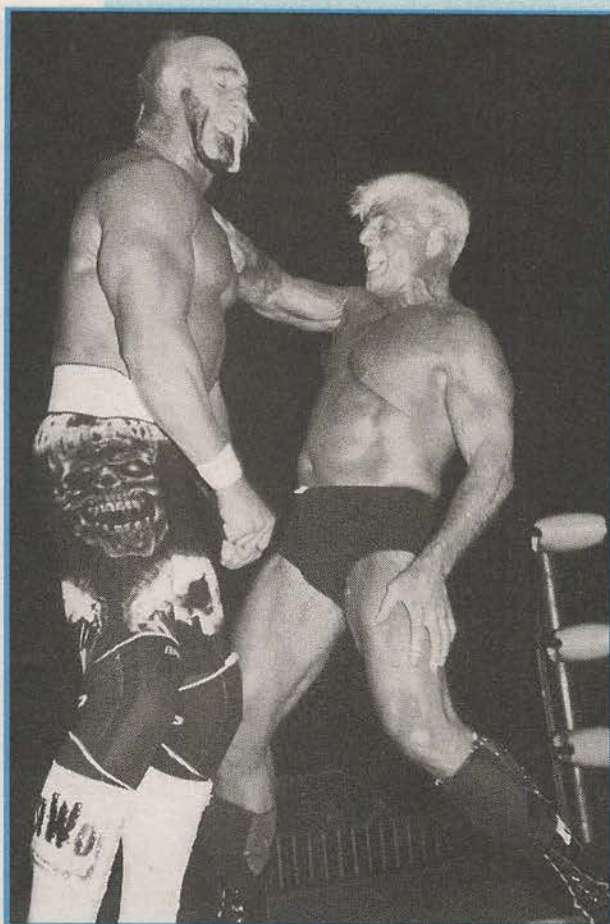
and tears to entertain them. Whether they loved me or hated me, I always had their respect. Or so I thought. Now what I see sickens me. They cheer a guy like Hollywood Hogan, a man who has tried to undermine the tradition that I established. For years, Hogan has shown nothing but disrespect to guys like me. Now, because he cups his hand to his ear and plays to the crowd again, the fans come back like some jilted lover. It's disgusting.

Q: Do you think they are booing you just because Hogan is popular again?

A: I don't care. Anyone who would take Hogan over me ought to have their head examined. They should be put away in that mental hospital for a while.

Q: Speaking of that, what can you tell us about that experience in the mental hospital?

A: I'd like to say it's none of your business. But you'd only push the issue. Anyway, I'm sure you saw *Nitro* when I was there. When the cameras weren't on, you had doctors everywhere, analyzing every word that I said. Watching tape of me on *Nitro*. Most of the time they had me doing



It totally disgusts Flair when he hears fans cheering Hollywood Hogan when the two of them clash. Given that he abuses his power all the time, it shouldn't surprise him that this happens.

word associations and ink blot tests. Do you know what that revealed?

Q: What?

A: There is no one more mentally sharp than Ric Flair. My mind is clear, and there's nothing wrong with my mental state. Piper and David tried to put me away, but it didn't work. You gotta be a lot sharper than they are to put one over on Ric Flair.

Q: Obviously, you have some things to settle with Piper as a wrestler and as president.

A: First of all, Anderson, if you think I'm going to fire Piper now, you're wrong. That would be the easy way out for that skirt-wearing idiot. No, no, no. I want "Hot Rod" around for the physical punishment I'm gonna dish out to him. He's going to be sorry

that he sent me away to that hospital.

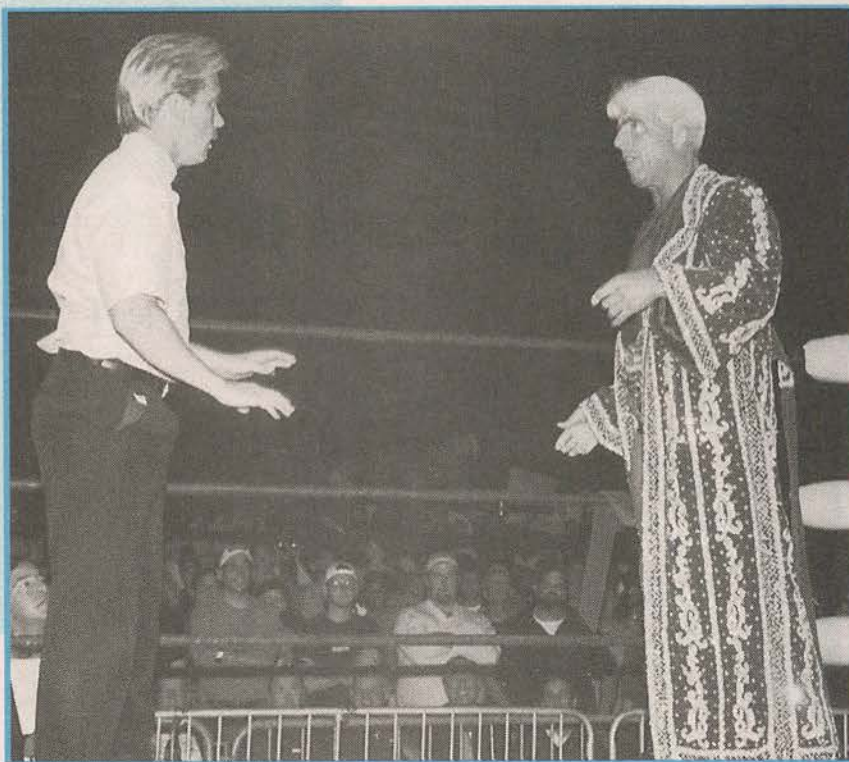
Q: Does this widen the rift between you and David?

A: I don't know what to say about that. He turned against me in favor of Hogan, of all people. He cavorted around with the NWO and that blonde. He says that Hogan was the only father he ever knew. What a slap on the face. He lived the lifestyle of royalty and pays me back by breaking my heart. He says he's concerned about my mental health now. Well, I don't think so. It's just another way to embarrass and humiliate me.

Q: Obviously, your circle of friends has gotten smaller. It seems that the Horsemen are your only support system as WCW president, and now a former WCW champion again.

A: Check your history, Anderson. Ric Flair has never been a former champion for very long. And you're absolutely right, the Horsemen are and always have been my support system. I can always count on them in time of need, whether it's in a match or when I'm locked up in some funny farm. Arn Anderson has been a lifelong friend. Chris Benoit and Dean Malenko provide the best backup any man could want. And Charles Robinson, my vice president, he's been great, too. The Horsemen are at their strongest level right now. And so am I. I'm still the president of WCW, and I *will* get that World title back. You can take that to the bank.

Q: Why have you given so much power to a referee who's only been with WCW for a few years.



Of all people to name as vice president of WCW, Flair chose ... a referee named Charles Robinson. "He does whatever I tell him to do," Flair says of his associate.

When he's not officiating, he has plenty of time to handle his duties as vice president.

Q: What exactly are his duties?

A: He does whatever I tell him to do.

Q: Is he considered a Horseman?

A: No, he's considered the vice president of World Championship Wrestling.

Q: He got himself into quite a jam when he started that feud with Gorgeous George.

A: You think I'm worried about the "Macho Man's" woman? I've stolen his lady before, and before you know it, his new lady will be in the "Nature Boy's" corner, too. Same thing for Madusa.

Q: You really believe that?

A: I'm the president, and if I say it'll happen, it'll happen.

Q: And you plan on putting yourself back into the title picture soon.

A: I don't care for the way you put that. You imply that the "Nature Boy" isn't main event material anymore. Ric Flair is always a contender. The bottom line is Ric Flair, with a belt or without a belt, is the man in this business. No matter what Piper, David, or Hogan say, Ric Flair is the straw that stirs the drink in WCW, and according to my contract as president, that is the only thing that will be for life. □

Do you really think you can trust Robinson?

A: Charles Robinson is one of the biggest Ric Flair fans to ever

come down the road. That makes him a pretty smart and trustworthy guy, in my book. He fits perfectly into my plans.

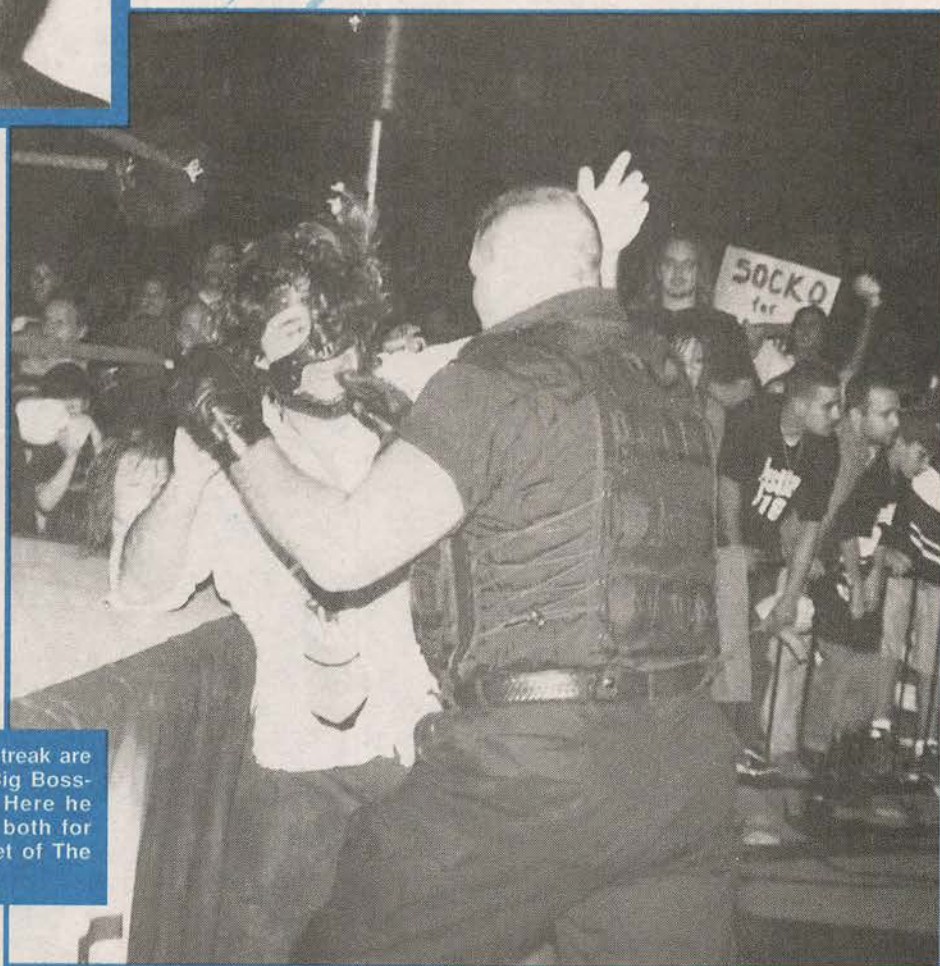
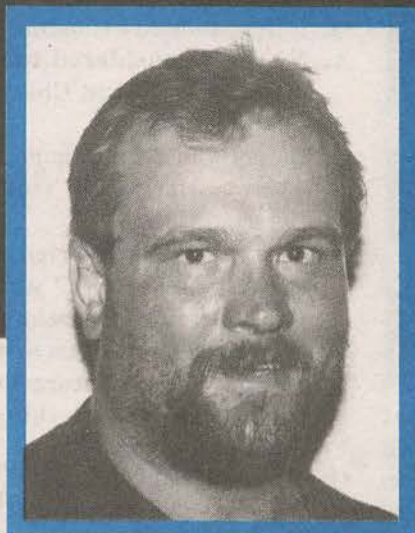


Flair knows he can count on the other Horsemen to help him out of jams these days. Unfortunately for him, he's not too popular with many of the other WCW wrestlers.

X-Ray

THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES

BIG BOSSMAN



Heavy fists and a mean streak are what ultimately landed Big Bossman back in the WWF. Here he demonstrates a little of both for Mankind, a favorite target of The Corporate Ministry.



CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"Evaluating Bossman is tricky business. He was brought to the WWF to protect Vince, and I guess he did an okay job. But if you're talking about getting ahead in the wrestling world, then Bossman's been a complete flop, daddy. Him and Shamrock had that tag team title, but Corporate business got in the way and fouled them up. Like the Captain always says, 'You can't serve two masters.' The Bossman's gotta choose between himself and The Corporate Ministry."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has managed 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"That Bossman is one mean son of a gun, darlin'. He just likes to kick and punch and stomp the you-know-what out of anybody that gets in his way. Which is a good thing, because he ain't nothin' special on the mat, if you catch my drift. And he's always swinging that billy club around. I hate to admit this, but I wasn't one of the people who was outraged when The Undertaker tried to hang him at WrestleMania XV. In fact, I almost cheered when I saw that, hon."

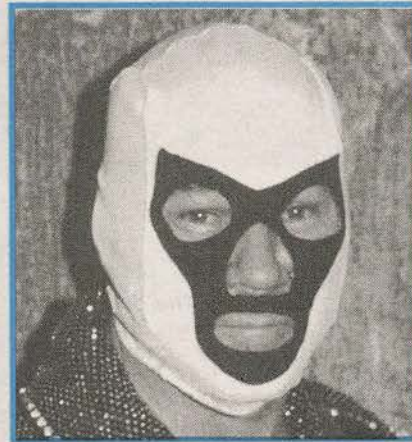
Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She now trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"The only reason Big Bossman has a job in the WWF right now is because of his attitude. This guy doesn't fool around. Vince knows that, and he knows just how mean Bossman can be, if the right buttons are pushed. If I were starting one of these cliques today, Bossman would be first on my list of people to call. He's loyal, he's tough, and he's one of the best brawlers to ever come down the pike. He might not get all the big matches, but nobody does his job better."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Malden, Massachusetts.



MR. WRESTLING II

"Big Bossman is exactly what he is—a big, mean, nasty man. But that doesn't say anything about his wrestling ability, which, in my humble opinion, is not all that great. Big brawlers like Bossman are the easiest opponents in the world to beat, and I made a great living off of them. Most men his size are slow, plodding, over-aggressive, and quite frankly stupid when it comes to strategy. Bossman is no different. I'd say he fits the mold perfectly."

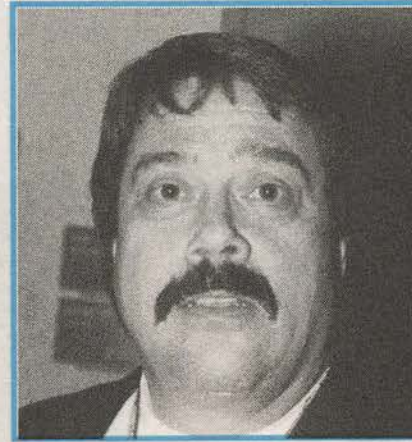
Mr. Wrestling II, one of wrestling's most popular and accomplished stars, held many regional tag team and singles titles throughout the South.



MASSA SAITO

"I don't know too much about Big Bossman, other than he's a big man who carries a big wooden stick. I hear that he makes everybody in the WWF afraid to bother Shane McMahon. Since I haven't seen him wrestle much, I can't say how good or bad he would do in my native country, but I do know that it takes more than a big wooden stick to intimidate the wrestlers in Japan. Perhaps he should travel to Asia to wrestle. Then we will see how tough he really is."

Massa Saito, a former AWA World heavyweight and WWF tag team champion, recently retired after a 24-year career.



LEE MARSHALL

"I really thought this guy would have wised up to gangs and cliques after his ordeal with the NWO a few years ago, but I guess Shane McMahon's money speaks louder than words. He seems happy doing what he's doing. As Ray Traylor, he usually tried to wrestle within the rules, and he had the fans behind him 100 percent. But I guess he has his price, just like everybody else in the world. Yeah, I have to be honest with you, I'm really disappointed in Big Bossman."

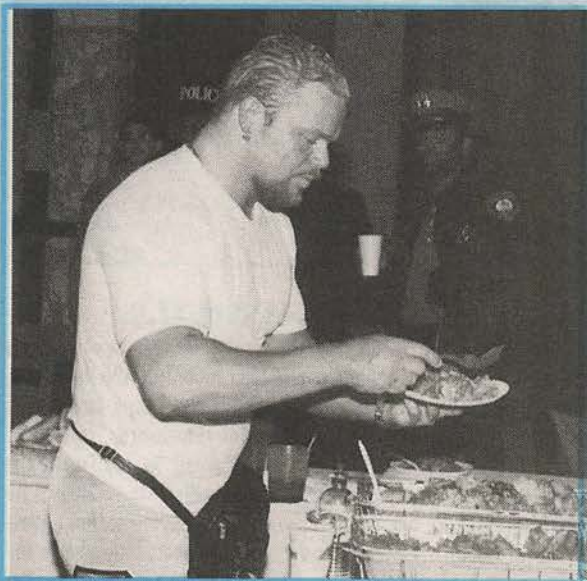
Lee Marshall, a former AWA and WCW broadcaster, is currently retired from the wrestling industry. He owns a production company in California.

THE SQUARED CIRCLE



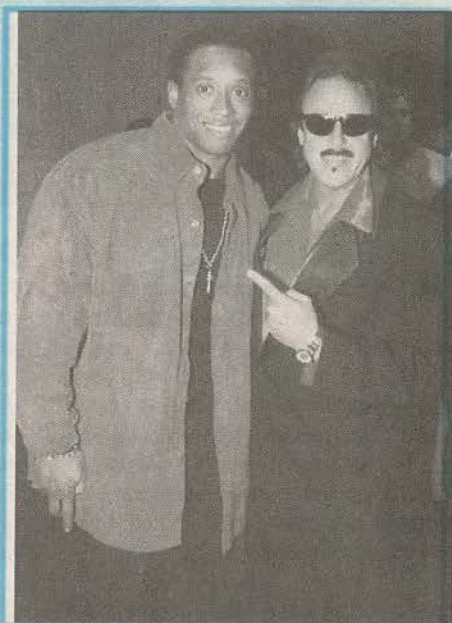
◀Diamond Lil, Mae Young, and Fabulous Moolah showed up early at WrestleMania XV in Philadelphia. The word in the women's locker was that they wanted a match against the three toughest women in the WWF.

▶WWF World champ "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin seems pretty interested in whatever it is that Capt. Lou Albano is either stuffing into or pulling out of his mouth.



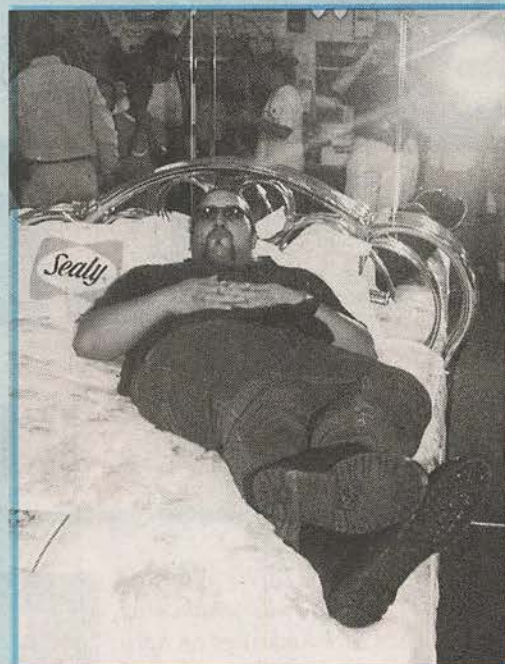
▲Shane Douglas takes care of some prematch munchies prior to his bout at ECW Living Dangerously. Wrestlers have all kinds of rituals they undertake before stepping into the ring. Now we know what Shane's is.

▶The only thing slowing down South faster than Jimmy Hart's mouth are the legs of Atlanta Falcons running back Jamal Anderson. Both guys slowed it down so our photographer could take this shot.





▲ "It's good to be the king," director/actor Mel Brooks said in one of his many movies. Jerry "The King" Lawler would certainly concur. Who else would be able to hold court with two ladies as lovely as Debra and Stacy Carter?



▲ A man of Paul Wight's size can draw a crowd wherever he goes—including a bedding store. Fans milled around and snapped pictures as "The Big Show" grabbed some winks on a brand new Sealy mattress.



▲ You've already seen what Shane Douglas likes to do before a match. Well, check out "Mr. PPV" Rob Van Dam. We should have known we'd find RVD in front of a mirror.



◀ Bill Goldberg decided that this fan would like to have his picture taken with him and literally picked him out of a crowd before a recent card at Philadelphia's First Union Spectrum.

Spot Light ON...

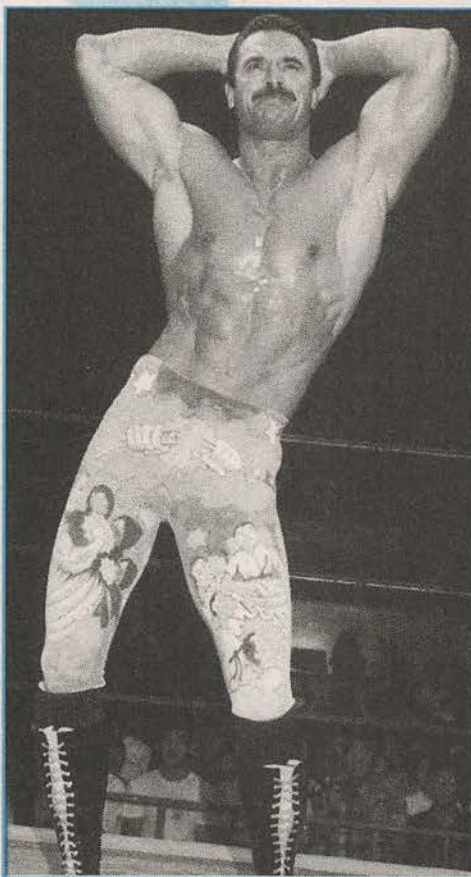
RICK RUDE

THE WRESTLING WORLD received a rude awakening when Rick Rude died on April 20 at the age of 40. Although he will probably be remembered most for his good looks and sex appeal, Rude was quite an accomplished wrestler.

"The Ravishing One" got his start in 1983 after graduating from Eddie Sharkey's training school. He briefly toured Canada, then traveled to the Mid-South region, where he joined Jimmy Hart's First Family and feuded with Jerry Lawler. He also changed the spelling of his last name from R-O-O-D to the more appropriate R-U-D-E. His greatest success in Mid-South came when he and King Kong Bundy won the tag team title in 1984.

Rude moved on to Florida in 1985 and won the Southern title from Pez Whatley, as well as the Florida tag title with Jesse Barr. His next stop was World Class Wrestling, where he won the American title from Iceman Parsons. In 1986, Rude joined the NWA and, with partner Manny Fernandez, won the World tag team title from The Rock 'n' Roll Express. Less than a year later, though, Rude was on the move again—this time to Stamford, Connecticut.

In the WWF, Rude engaged in memorable feuds with such superstars as Paul Orndorff and Jake Roberts. He also started the unusual tradition of kissing a female fan after each victory.



An annoying obsession with his own physique caught the attention of Intercontinental champ The Ultimate Warrior, whom Rude upset for the title on April 2, 1989. Thanks to interference from Roddy Piper, Rude lost the belt back to Warrior, and a bitter feud with Piper ensued. Rude's tenure in WWF ended in 1990, when then-President Jack Tunney suspended him indefinitely

for making derogatory remarks about Big Bossman's mother.

Rude briefly hit the indy circuit before making his WCW debut at Halloween Havoc '91. As The Halloween Phantom, he defeated Tom Zenk, then unmasked to reveal himself as the first member of Paul E.'s Dangerous Alliance. He waged epic battles against Sting, whom he defeated for the U.S. title on November 19, and Rick Steamboat, who beat him for the same title. On May 1, 1994, Rude defeated Sting for the short-lived WCW International title, but at a heavy price. He suffered a devastating back injury that ultimately forced him from the ring.

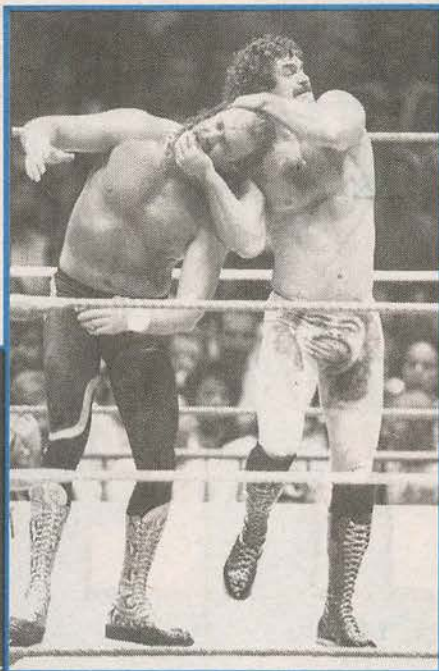
Rude made several unexpected appearances during his unofficial retirement. In 1997, he showed up in ECW to antagonize Shane Douglas, then, after a brief stint in The Triple Threat, served as Bam Bam Bigelow's adviser. He took on a similar role with DeGeneration X in the WWF. Most recently, Rude turned up in WCW in the corner of long-time friend Curt Hennig. Rude had become so ubiquitous that he actually appeared on both as taped *Raw* and a live *Nitro* on the same night in early-'98.

No question, Rude was a rambler. But he was also a fine wrestler, and a charismatic performer whose career achievements are remembered in our "Spotlight."

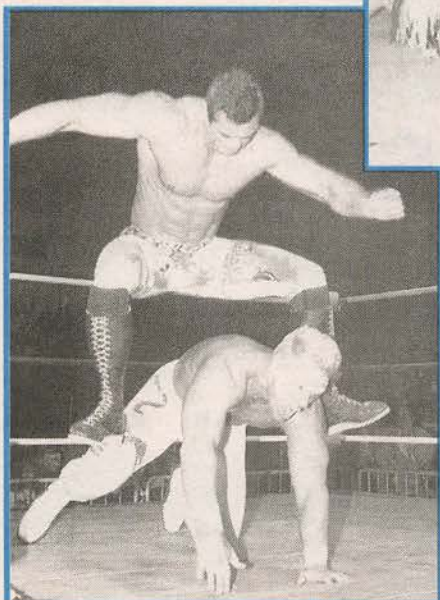


October 1984: Rick Rude (then known as Rick Rood) argues with King Kong Bundy and Jimmy Hart, the men with whom he won the Mid-South tag team title. Bundy and Hart would later force Rude to leave the territory.

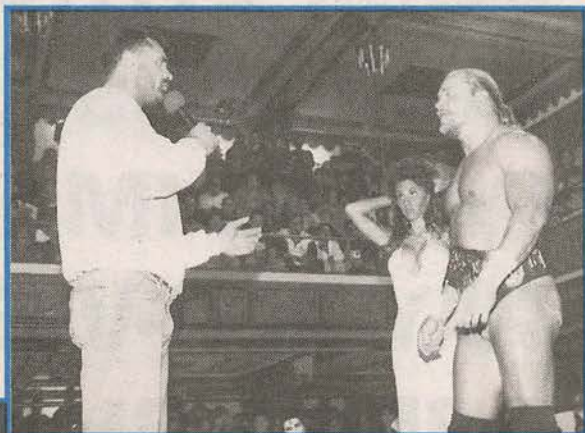
October 1988: The Jake Roberts-Rick Rude feud was one of the hottest in wrestling history. Rude angered Roberts when he kissed Jake's wife, Cheryl, and had a likeness of her face embossed on his tights.



April 1989: Always provocative, Rude gyrates above the fallen Ultimate Warrior en route to an I-C title victory. Hard feelings between Rude and Warrior surfaced after a posedown to see who had the best physique.



October 1997: Shane Douglas and Francine's world was turned upside down when Rude talked Bam Bam Bigelow into challenging his Triple Threat partner for the ECW title. Douglas lost and Francine ended up with a cracked pelvis when she interfered.



March 1993: Rude beat Sting for two titles: the WCW U.S. and International belts. Little did Rude know as he pounced on the man's spine that it would be a back injury suffered in a later match with Sting that would end his career.



June 1998: Konnan was the last man Rude ever double-crossed. He and lifelong friend Curt Hennig betrayed Konnan at The Great American Bash after pretending to be his Wolfpac teammates. Rude and Hennig were inseparable.

MIDYEAR REPORT

ACTION

TALENT ROSTER

COMPETITIVENESS

BUSINESS

PUBLIC IMAGE

PAY-PER-VIEWS

ARENA SHOWS

TV PRODUCTION

ANNOUNCERS

FAN RELATIONS

IN THE RING, the first half of 1999 wasn't kind to Vincent K. McMahon Jr. The owner of the WWF watched Steve Austin win the WWF World title, The Undertaker try to burn down his house, "Big Show" Paul Wight turn against him after he had signed him to a lucrative contract, and his son, Shane, slap him in the face.

On paper, however, the first half of 1999 was one of McMahon's best. The WWF continued its rise in popularity, unmatched even in the glory years of the mid-1980s. WrestleMania XV attracted the highest number of buys of any wrestling pay-per-view in history. Most arena cards sold out. *Raw* continued its ratings dominance over WCW's *Nitro*. The WWF's ledgers showed McMahon getting richer and richer.

These days, wrestling's hottest feud isn't between Austin and The Rock, or Ric Flair and Hollywood Hogan. It's between *Nitro* and *Raw* in the Monday night ratings battle. During the first half of 1999, the WWF scored one substantial victory after another. Right now, *Raw* vs. *Nitro* is as one-sided as a Butterbean vs. Bart Gunn boxing match.

But can the WWF build upon its dominance? We'll find out. First, however, a recap of the first half. This month, we report on the WWF. Next month, in the October 1999 issue of *Inside Wrestling*, we do the same on WCW.

It was an amazing half-year. Vince McMahon won the Royal Rumble. Chyna left DeGeneration X and joined The Corporation. Then, just when it looked as if Chyna and Hunter Hearst Helmsley had reunited in DX, they turned against X-Pac and The New Age Outlaws and aligned themselves with The Corporation. Mankind lost, won, and lost the WWF World title. The Rock won, lost, won, and lost the WWF title. Austin overcame the odds to regain the WWF title. And Owen Hart and Jeff Jarrett proved to be a formidable tag team.

So much more happened in this fascinating six months. Austin humbled McMahon at the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, then humbled him again at WrestleMania. Sable held on to the women's title and proved she's more than just a pretty

face (and body). McMahon declared war on The Undertaker's Ministry, his own Corporation, and DX.

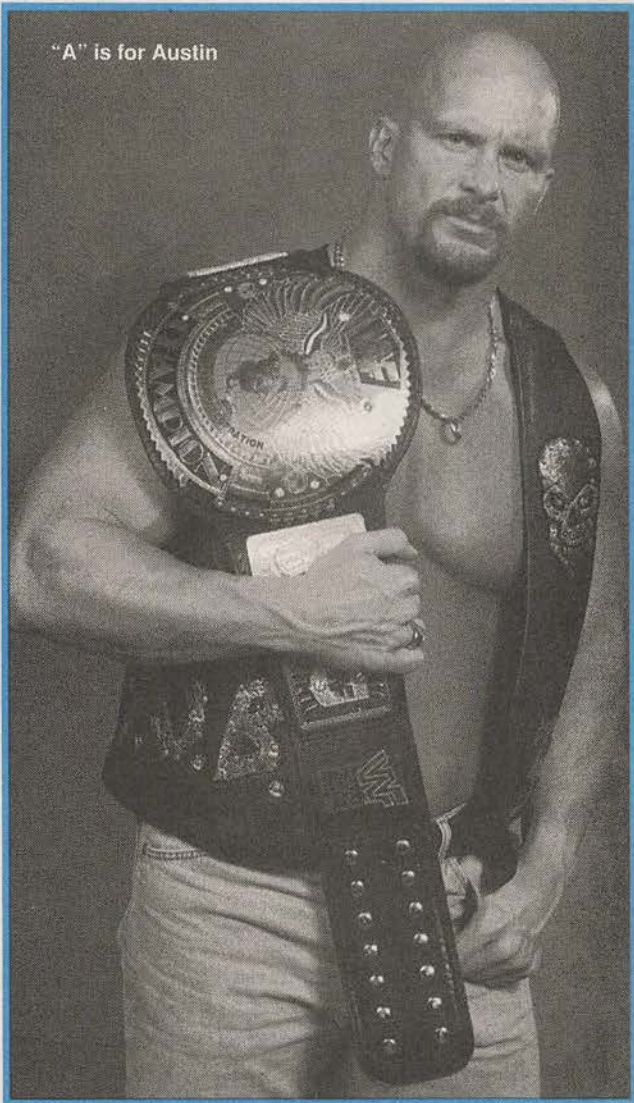
On the following pages, we've compiled an offbeat look at the WWF's first six months of 1999. The first half of a year provides the questions, the second half the answers. This year's questions: Can Austin continue to frustrate McMahon and hold on to the World title? Can Austin and Wight co-exist? Will McMahon regain control of the WWF? And can WCW catch up to the WWF in the Monday night ratings war?

For now, let's review the half-year that was.

THE GRADES ARE IN ...

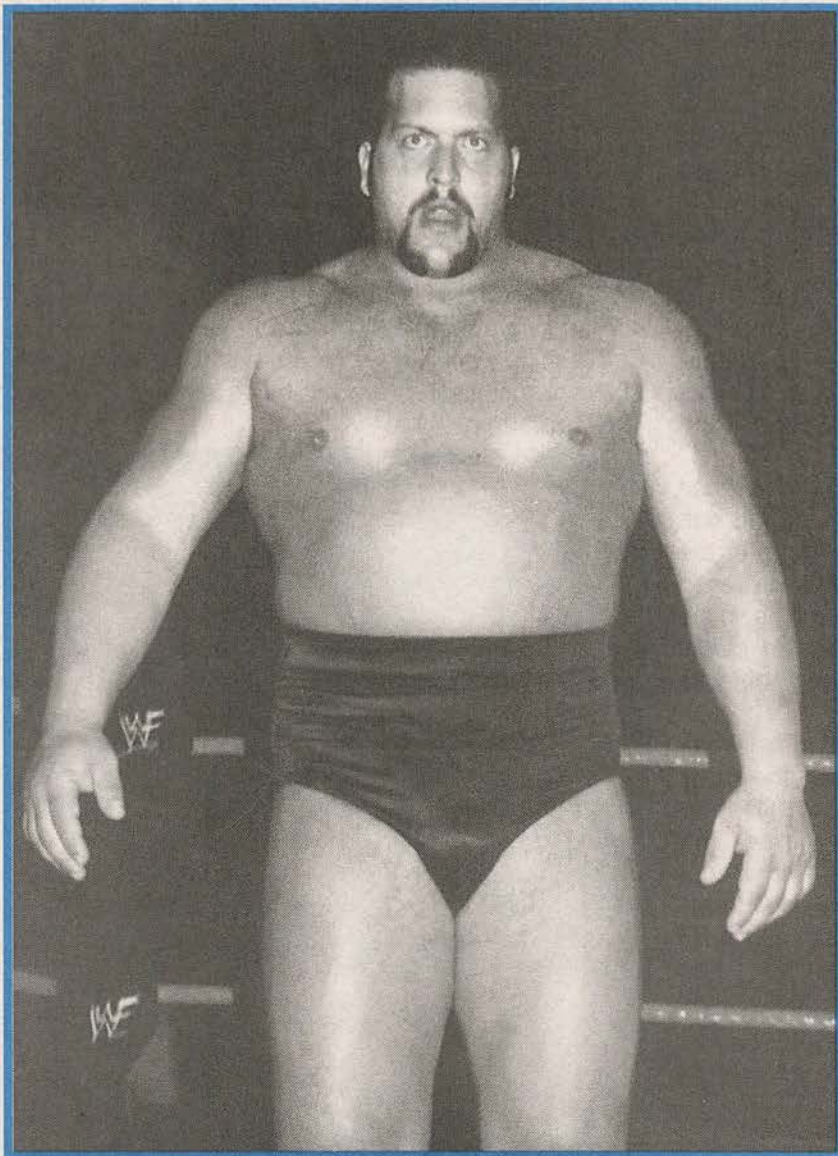
They get an "A": Steve Austin regained the WWF World title despite Vince McMahon's best efforts to stop him ... **Mankind** found himself at odds with **The Corporation**, but he did win his second WWF World title and beat **Paul Wight** in a boiler room brawl at Backlash ... Pimpin' may not be easy, but winning the Intercontinental title proved to be as easy as 1-2-3 for **The Godfather**.

"A" is for Austin





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Paul Wight gets a "C"

They get a "B": **The Rock** couldn't hold on to the WWF World title, even though he had the boss on his side ... **The Undertaker** defeated and nearly killed **Big Bossman**, but he once again fell short in his title pursuit and lost some matches to **Ken Shamrock** ... Shamrock fell short in his bid for the Intercontinental title, but appeared to be picking up steam as the year turned the corner ... **Bob Holly** won the hardcore title at **WrestleMania** and looked good in his initial defenses before losing the belt to **Al Snow** ... **Kane** left **The Corporation** and won the WWF World tag team title

... **X-Pac** bounced right back from **Hunter Hearst Helmsley's** betrayal ... **Jesse James** lost the Intercontinental title, but just winning it was an accomplishment for the former World tag team champ ... **Sable** needs more competition ... **Shane McMahon** has looked surprisingly good in the ring. And, of course, he turned against **Vince**, which earns him some points.

They get a "C": **Paul Wight** made an impact after jumping from **WCW** to the **WWF**, but we fear he might get lost in the shuffle ... **Goldust** lost the Intercontinental title to **The Godfather**; maybe he oughta go back to being plain ol' **Dustin Runnels** ... **Hunter Hearst Helmsley's** jump to **The Corporation** was an attempt to fix his falling fortunes, but look for him to step it up in a big way in the second half ... **D-Lo Brown** finished the half year without a title ... **Val Venis** looks good, but looks aren't everything in wrestling ... **Owen Hart** and **Jeff Jarrett** lost the tag belts to **Kane** and **X-Pac** ... **Billy Gunn** lost the hardcore title and needs to get **The New Age Outlaws** back on track after **Helmsley's** deception ... **Bradshaw** and **Faarooq** won a fair number of matches, but they haven't made a serious bid for the World tag title ... **Al Snow** finally won that hardcore championship.

They get a "D": **Edge** has failed to impress recently ... Same for **Gangrel** and **Christian** ... **The Blue Meanie** ought to forget about **Goldust** and try to accomplish something on his own ... **Test** finished in the top two in a battle royal at **WrestleMania**, but hasn't done much else ... **Bart Gunn** looked overmatched when he got kayoed by **Butterbean**, but he did drop three tough guys in the "Brawl For All" last year ... **Jacquelyn** accomplished very little ... **Matt** and **Jeff Hardy** have a chance to be stars in a few years.

They get an "F": **Tiger Ali Singh** has been no



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match for The Godfather (or anybody else) ... **Tori** has been no match in brains or beauty for Sable.

They get an "incomplete": We still need to see more of newcomers **Nicole Bass** and **Ivory** ... **The Legion of Doom** barely wrestled.

RATING THE WRESTLEMANIA XV MATCHES

1. Steve Austin vs. The Rock. The Rock thought he had everything going his way, including Vince

McMahon as special guest referee. But WWF Commissioner Shawn Michaels squashed that idea by banning McMahon from officiating the bout, evening the table for "Stone-Cold." In this terrific match, Austin got up from two Rock-bottoms, and The Rock got up from a Stone-Cold stunner before Mankind arrived on the scene and counted Austin's pin of Rock for the World title.

2. Shane McMahon vs. X-Pac. Hard to believe that an executive and son of the federation owner could be involved in one of the best matches at WrestleMania, but this one had everything: fine wrestling by both men, and the turn of Hunter Hearst Helmsley and Chyna against DeGeneration X.

3. Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Kane. "Triple-H" was in big trouble when Chyna mounted the ring apron and begged Kane for the opportunity to smash her former friend with a chair. When Kane turned around, Chyna smashed *him* across the back. Chyna and "Triple-H" were reunited!

4. The Undertaker vs. Big Bossman. A brutally "Hell In A Cell" match nearly resulted in tragedy when Undertaker, who won the match, hung Bossman by a noose, and Paul Bearer pressed the button that lifted the cage into the air ... Bossman and all.

5. Jesse James vs. Goldust vs. Ken Shamrock vs. Val Venis. James put his Intercontinental title on the line in this four-corners match and benefited when Shamrock and Venis got themselves counted out. He retained the title by pinning Goldust at 9:43.

6. Bob Holly vs. Al Snow vs. Billy Gunn. Gunn was up against it in his attempt to defend the hardcore title. He didn't even get pinned, but when Holly covered Snow at 7:17, the rules stipulated that Holly became the new hardcore champion.

7. Mankind vs. Paul Wight. Best



A Rock-bottom from The Rock



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moment of the match: Wight choke-slammimg Mankind onto two metal chairs. Unfortunately for Wight, the act got him disqualified. Mankind thus earned the right to referee the Austin-Rock match later in the evening ... even though he was taken to the hospital.

8. Owen Hart & Jeff Jarrett vs. D-Lo Brown & Test. Brown and Test weren't a regular team; they were forced to team because they were the last two men remaining in a battle royal held before the PPV. They didn't team very well. Hart and Jarrett had no trouble defending the World tag team belts. Couldn't the WWF have found some real tag title competition for its biggest card of the year?

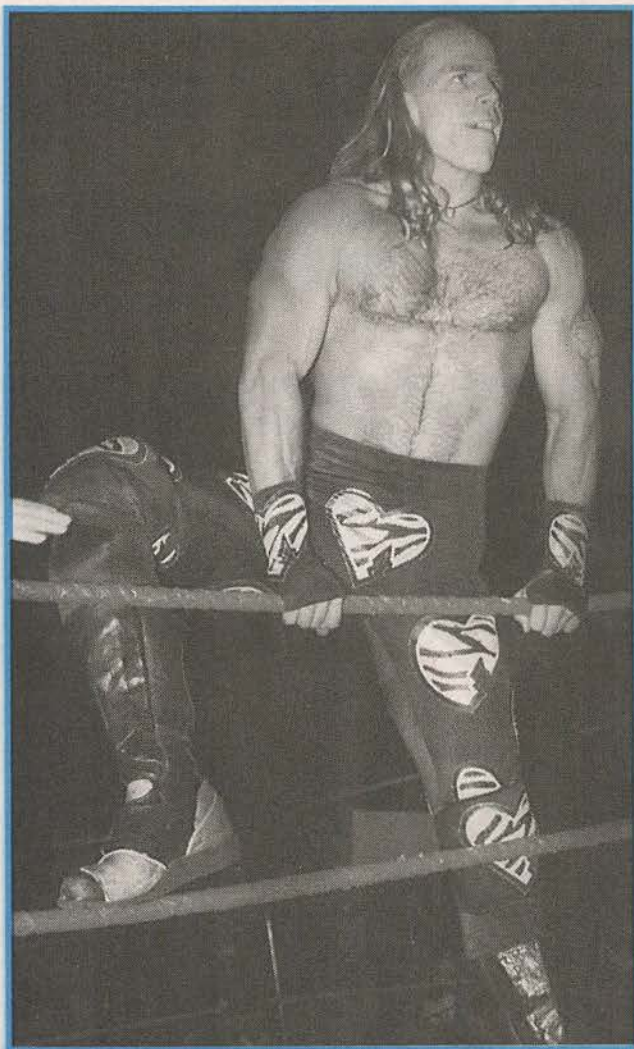
9. Sable vs. Tori. Most male wrestling fans would rather see Sable parading around the ring in a skimpy bikini—or maybe some well-placed body paint—than defending the women's title. But she looked fairly good, and Tori was overmatched once Nicole Bass interfered.

10. Butterbean vs. Bart Gunn. Your guess is as good as ours as to what a boxing match was doing on a wrestling card. Maybe Butterbean was wondering the same thing, because he wasted only 35 seconds of his and our time before knocking out Gunn in their "Brawl For All" match.

THREE STORIES THE WWF COULD HAVE LIVED WITHOUT ...

1. The mainstream media examine wrestling (and generally don't like what they see). ESPN's *Outside The Lines* and *Inside Edition* joined other mainstream media outlets in questioning wrestling's marketing to children. The shows, along with others, questioned whether wrestling—the WWF in particular—is a bad influence on children because of the sexual and violent content in its shows. McMahon was forced to defend his product, claiming the WWF didn't target young audiences.

2. Shawn Michaels retires. Acting on his doctor's advice, the three-time former WWF World champion retired after a 14-year career, depriving the federation of one of its greatest and most popular stars. Said Michaels: "The circumstances were, if you get back in the ring, you could really do significant damage to yourself and affect the rest of your life, so in that instant, it was an easy decision to make." Easy to make, perhaps, but not easy for wrestling fans to take.



Adios, HBK!

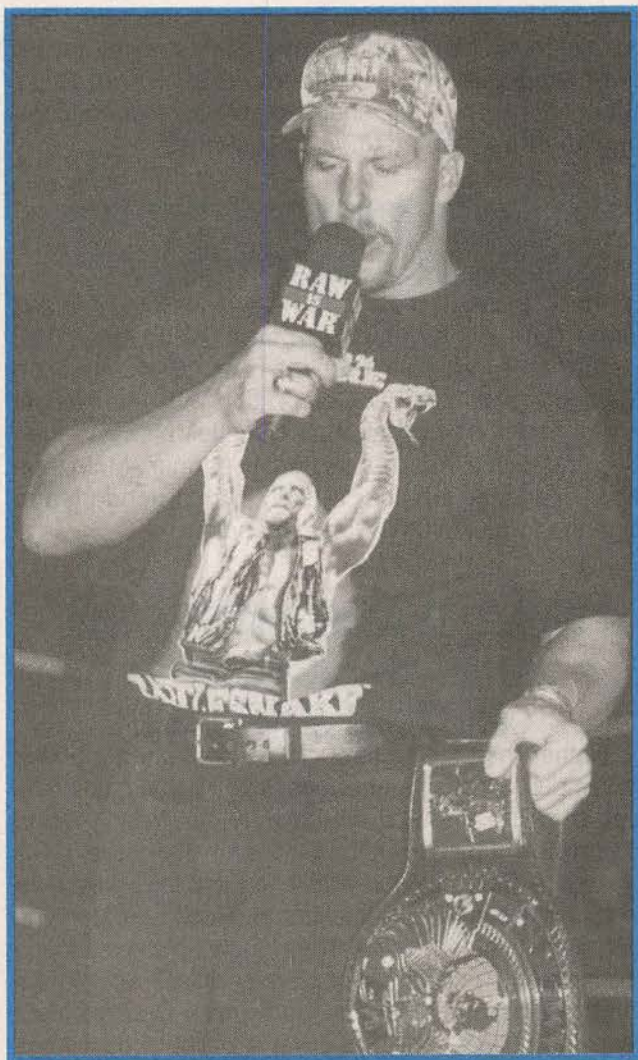
3. Another Pete Rose fiasco. Talk about a guy who will do anything for a buck. At WrestleMania XIV last year, Rose insulted Red Sox fans and ended up getting tombstoned by Kane. At WrestleMania XV, Rose came out disguised as the San Diego Chicken and once again got tombstoned by Kane. Please, Major League Baseball, let Rose into the Hall of Fame, just to get him out of our hair.

... AND THREE STORIES THE WWF DIDN'T MIND HEARING ABOUT AT ALL

1. The WWF scores huge ratings wins over WCW. *Raw* proved to be unstoppable in the Monday night



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"Mr. Popularity" Steve Austin

ratings battle with WCW's *Nitro*. The March 8 *Raw* drew a record 6.5 rating and defeated *Nitro* by a margin of 2.4 (or more than two million viewers). The WWF's success had WCW scrambling for answers ... but coming up with few.

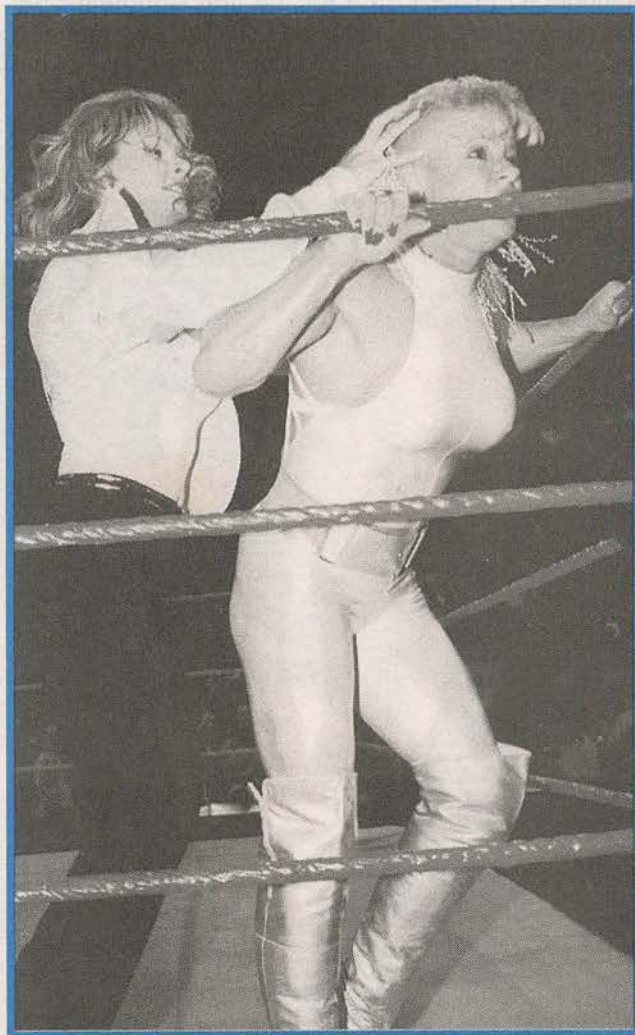
2. Steve Austin beats the telecast of the Daytime Soap Opera Awards and *20/20* ... in the ratings. As additional proof of wrestling's and Steve Austin's popularity, the February 26 episode of CBS' *Nash Bridges*, which featured "Stone-Cold," beat both the second hour of the Daytime Soap Opera Awards broadcast on NBC and *20/20*, the ABC news magazine. It makes you wonder: If *Raw* is the most popular show on cable-TV, does it have the potential to be

among the most popular shows on network TV?

3. Well, me might know the answer to that very soon. The WWF's *SmackDown* special did so well in the ratings on April 29 that UPN, an over-the-air national network, was considering making it a regular series next season. *SmackDown*, featuring Steve Austin and The Rock vs. The Undertaker and Hunter Hearst Helmsley in the main event, did a 5.8 and beat out ABC and WB programming for the 8 p.m. time slot.

THE FAN

Sable wasn't sure whether to be happy or afraid when an obsessed fan kept interfering in her matches against Luna Vachon. Sure, the fan, who came



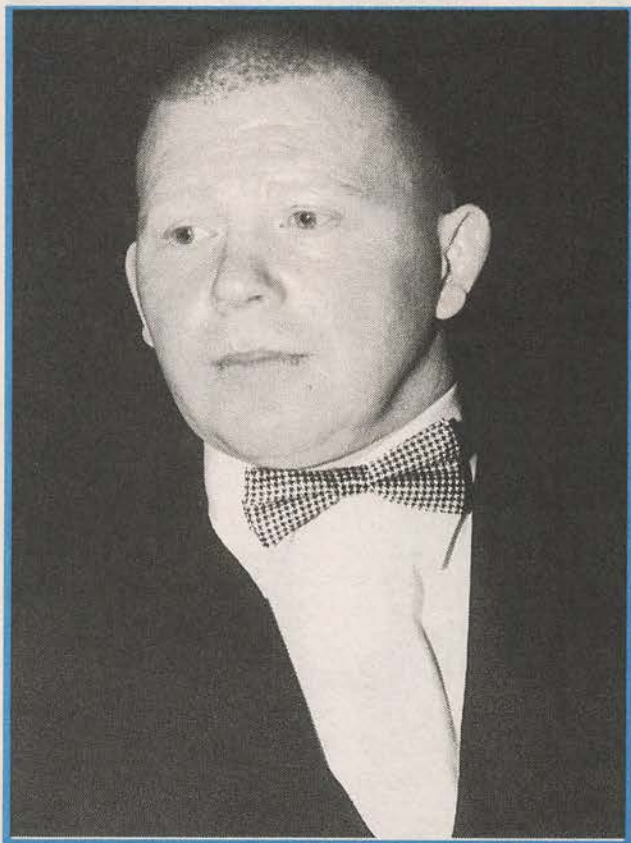
Tori roughs up Luna

WWE MIDYEAR REPORT

out of the stands, helped Sable retain the WWF women's title for a while, and once even gave her a yellow rose, but how many times have we heard stories about fans stalking celebrities? "I appreciate the support," Sable said, "but this is freaking me out." The fan, Tori, eventually became Sable's arch-rival, and she's still pursuing the WWF women's title.

HMMMMMM ... WONDER WHERE HE GOT THIS IDEA FROM

Following in the footsteps of Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura, who successfully followed up a career in wrestling with a career in politics, three-time former WWF World champion Bob Backlund announced plans to run for the first Congressional District seat in Connecticut in 2000. Backlund will run as a Republican in the predominantly Democratic district. And he got one of his first endorsements from WWF CEO Linda McMahon. "I can certainly tell you that I think Bob is as qualified as many of the



Backlund in Congress?

people I've seen running for office," she said. "I've always found him to be an honorable, straightforward man, and that will serve him well." Honorable? Straightforward? Well, she's not exactly a good judge of that. She's married to Vince McMahon.

MAYBE GETTING PAUL WIGHT FROM WCW WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA

Vince McMahon thought he was helping himself when Paul Wight jumped from WCW to the WWF earlier this year. In fact, at first, Wight was on McMahon's side in The Corporation. But when Wight choke-slammed McMahon at WrestleMania XV, then became Steve Austin's tag team partner, McMahon was wondering whether it really was a good idea to sign the former WCW World champion.

WHAT THE SUPER BOWL REALLY NEEDS IS LESS FOOTBALL AND MORE WRESTLING

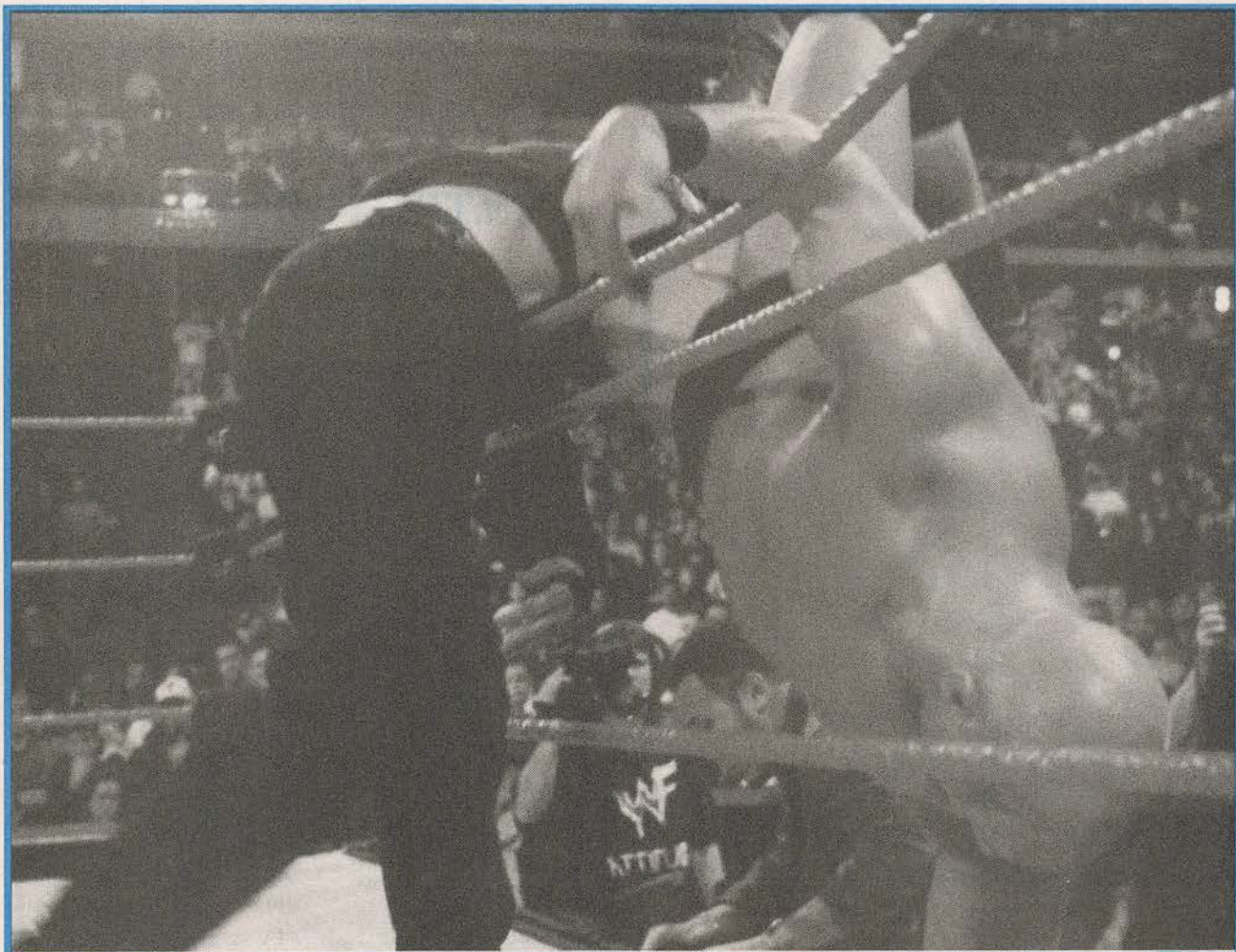
Rather than sitting through highlights and piped-in music during halftime of Super Bowl XXXIII, many fans opted for an unusual match between WWF World champion The Rock and Mankind on the USA Network's *Halftime Heat*. McMahon told fans they were watching history in the making as Rock and Mankind battled in an empty arena. They fought up steps, though the cafeteria, in and out of several offices, and in the loading area of the Tucson Convention Center before Mankind used a forklift to lower a pallet of beer kegs onto The Rock, then pinned him.

NOW IF HE COULD FIX THOSE LITTLE ROUND BALLS IN THE LOTTERY, HE'D BE RICH WAIT A MINUTE, HE IS RICH!

Obviously, it was more than just luck that Steve Austin drew number one and Vince McMahon drew number 30 at the Royal Rumble. Thanks to WWF Commissioner Shawn Michaels, McMahon was later given the number-two slot. But that didn't mean his Rumble performance was a spectacular one. After Austin chased him out of the ring (but not over the top rope) into a women's bathroom and got



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Vince eliminates Austin from the Rumble

ambushed by The Corporation, he made believe he was out of the match. Then, when the Rumble came down to him and Austin, he benefited from The Rock distracting Austin. McMahon was exultant over his victory, but few people—other than those in The Corporation—were impressed.

WE THINK STEVE AUSTIN COULD HAVE GOTTEN AN EXTRA PRESS PASS OR TWO

Shawn Michaels said he bought his ticket to WrestleMania XV from a scalper for \$400 after the WWF office refused to give him a freebie. Unlike the other fans in attendance at the First Union Center in

Philadelphia, Michaels had the opportunity to climb into the ring and put Vince McMahon in his place. Just wondering: How'd he get past security guards?

JUST KEEP TELLING YOURSELF, JERRY ... IT'S ONLY A MOVIE ... IT'S ONLY A MOVIE

Jerry Lawler is a funny guy when he provides hilarious commentary on WWF broadcasts, but sometimes he takes things a little too seriously. For example, last fall, Lawler (playing himself) and comedian Jim Carrey (playing late comedian Andy Kaufman) made headlines for their heated exchanges during the filming of *Man On The Moon*, the biographical



MIDYEAR REPORT



Jerry Lawler and Jim Carrey

movie about Kaufman. Then, this winter, Carrey reportedly turned down a million-dollar offer from the WWF to appear as Kaufman at WrestleMania XV and wrestle Lawler. It's either a credit to Carrey's acting ability, or an indication of Lawler's insanity, that when Lawler looked at Carrey, he saw Kaufman.

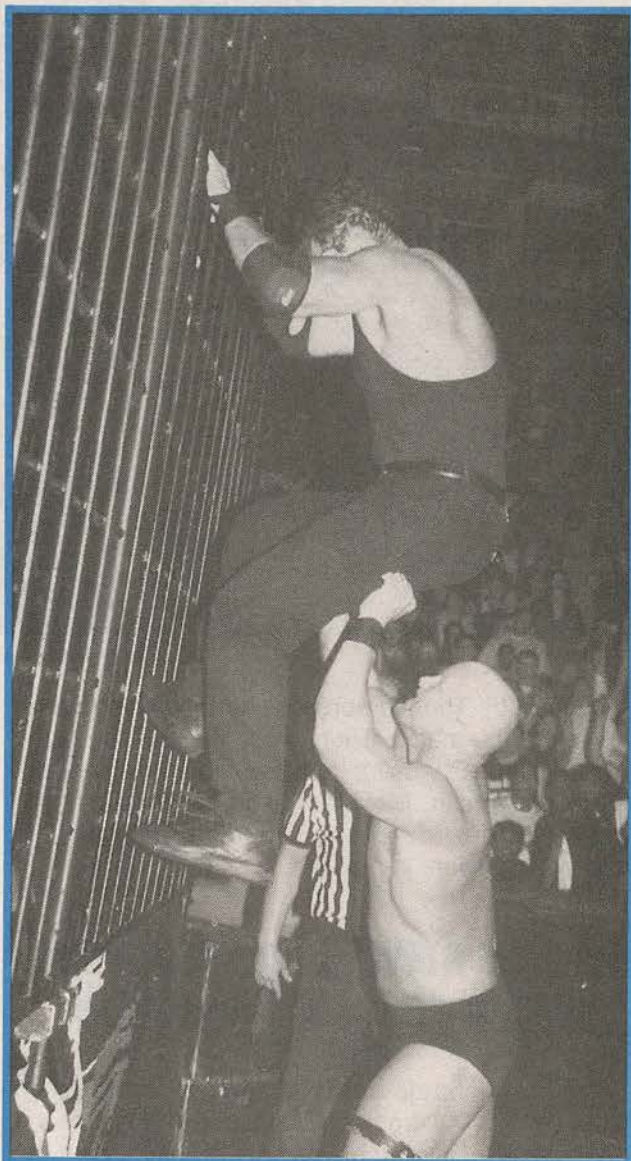
"TAKE THIS JOB AND SHOVE IT"

We'd like to think that Steve Austin is the most popular wrestler in the world because of his tremendous skills, but we suspect it has something to do with his willingness to do something every employee in America wants to do: give his boss the what-for. "Stone-Cold" got his chance at St. Valentine's Day Massacre in February, and took advantage of the situation. Austin attacked Vince McMahon before the bell, pushed McMahon off the cage and sent him

crashing through a broadcasters' table, delivered a hellacious beating, and overcame interference by WWF newcomer Paul Wight to win the bout. McMahon, bloodied and beaten, was carried back to the dressing room by Wight.

SOMETIMES WATCHING *RAW* AIN'T EASY

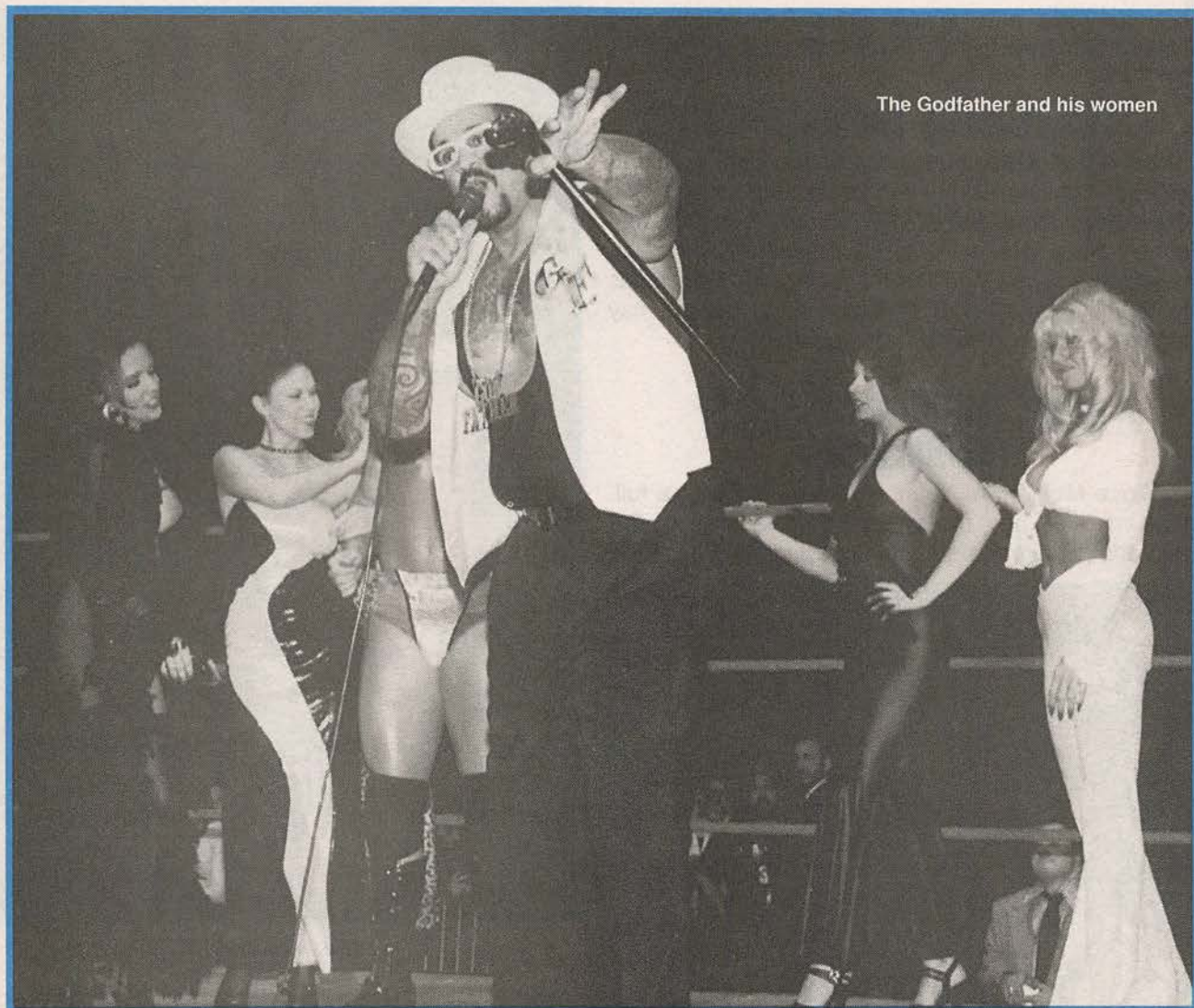
Thanks to the antics of The Godfather, *Raw* could have earned an R rating. Almost every Monday



Steve Austin vs. Vince McMahon



MIDYEAR REPORT



The Godfather and his women

night, The Godfather parades his lovely ladies to the ring and offers them to his opponents. The opponent has a choice: take one (or several) of the ladies for the night, or take a beating at the hands of The Godfather. Meanwhile, The Godfather is telling the fans, "Pimpin' ain't easy." We're sure that's exactly what parents want their children to hear.

WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Steve Austin. Facing nearly impossible odds—a federation head named Vince McMahon who would do anything to keep the belt out of his hands—Austin relied on his own special skills and tremendous

courage to regain the World title from The Rock at WrestleMania XV. And in the process, he built upon his stature as one of the best wrestlers in the world.

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Steve Austin. Is there a sports fan in North America who can't identify the phrases "Austin 3:16" and "'cause 'Stone-Cold' said so"? Remember how popular Hulk Hogan was in the 1980s. Well, he has Hogan beat. This man is a T-shirt industry unto himself. Magazines such as *Rolling Stone* and *TV Guide* have featured him with large stories. He appeared on



MIDYEAR REPORT

national radio with Howard Stern. And he revealed his soft side by admitting to his marital problems.

TAG TEAM OF THE HALF-YEAR

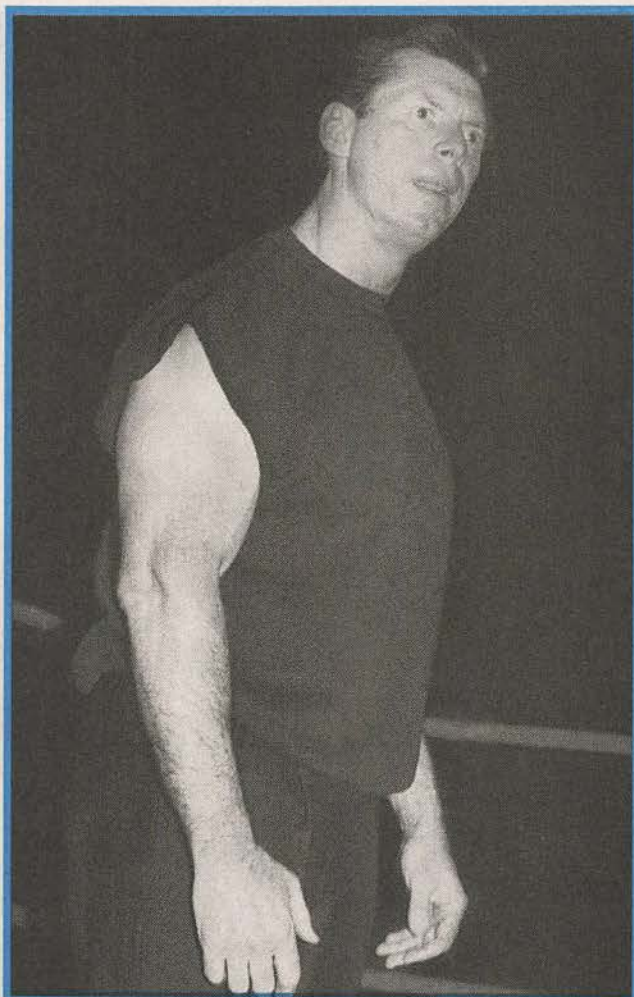
Kane and X-Pac. This unlikely duo cleanly defeated a pretty impressive tag team, Jeff Jarrett and Owen Hart, for its first WWF World tag team title, and continued to look good in title defenses. The major potential problem with the team is Kane, who tends to be a little unstable. But if Kane and X-Pac can stay together, they'll do some major damage.

MOST HATED WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Vince McMahon. Yeah, we know, he's not a full-time wrestler, he's the owner of the federation. But over the past year, no man in wrestling has been the



X-Pac and Kane



Vince McMahon

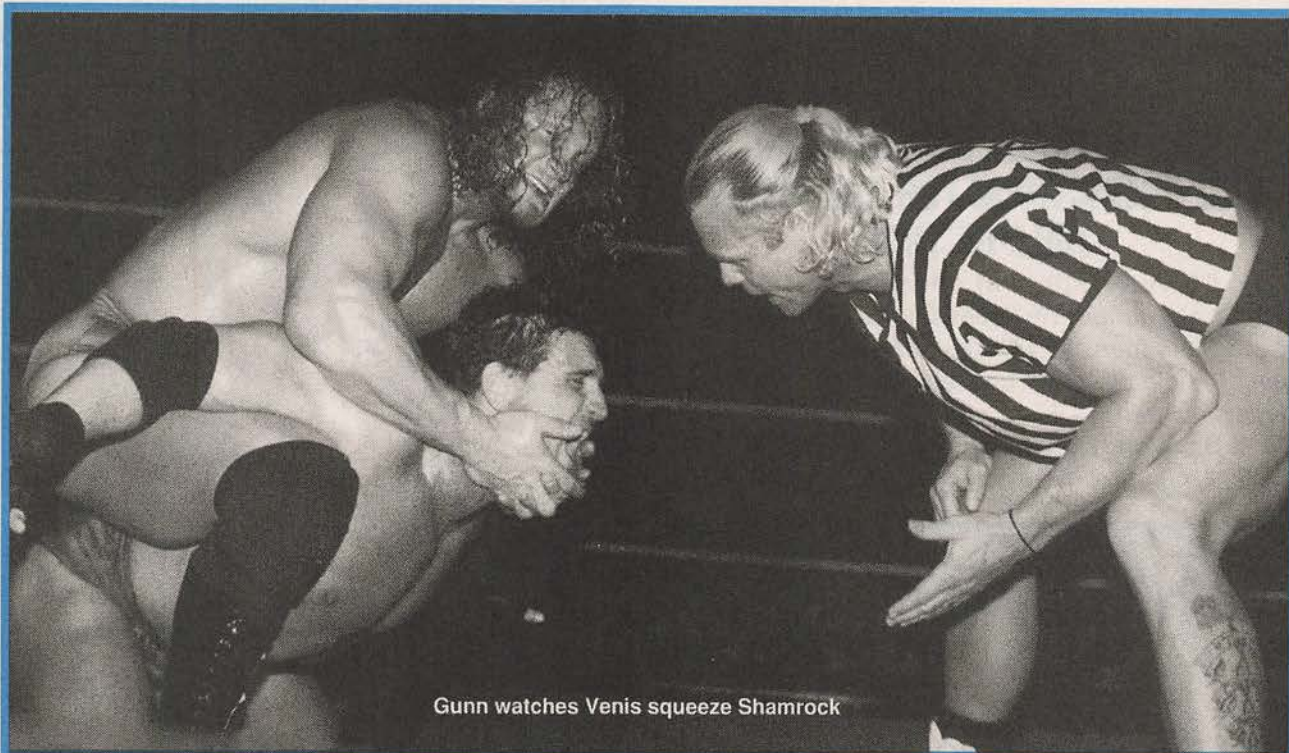
focus of more hatred than McMahon, whose failed attempt to foil Austin's title bid was the highlight of the year for many fans. Now McMahon is taking on DeGeneration X, and the Corporate Ministry, the WWF's two most powerful cliques. And it looks like an alliance with Austin is on the horizon. He could become one of the most popular people in the WWF in the second half of 1999.

MATCH OF THE HALF-YEAR

Steve Austin vs. The Rock, March 28, First Union Center in Philadelphia. Their 16-minute classic for the WWF World title featured each man getting up from the other's finishing move—and Austin did it twice, rebounding from two Rock-bottoms.



MIDYEAR REPORT



Gunn watches Venis squeeze Shamrock

Three referees were knocked out before Austin converted on a Stone-Cold stunner and Mankind—who was supposed to be the referee for the match in the first place—hobbled to the ring and counted Austin's pin of Mankind. But the real highlight came afterward, when Austin executed his stunner on Vince McMahon and poured beer on him.

HEY, HE MIGHT BE CROOKED, BUT AT LEAST HE'S HONEST ABOUT IT

When Billy Gunn was named referee for the Ken Shamrock vs. Val Venis match for the Intercontinental title, he told everyone who'd listen that he was willing to accept bribes. So when Gunn made a ridiculously fast count on Shamrock at the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, we knew that Venis had dug deep into his pockets.

HOW OUR SECOND HALF PREDICTIONS FOR 1998 FARED

(From THE WRESTLER, September 1998)

1. LOD 2000 will regain the World tag team title. LOD 2000? Didn't those guys used to be known

as The Road Warriors? The Legion of Doom? Uh ... we forgot about them.

2. Ric Flair will return to the WWF. Well, we can't say he didn't give it the ol' college try. Flair talked about possibly jumping back to the WWF, but he worked out his legal problems with WCW. And now he's causing more trouble than anybody in WCW can handle.

3. So will Kevin Nash and Scott Hall. Well, Hall and Nash reunited and got back together in the NWO. As far as we can tell, Nash and Hall have no intention of jumping back to the WWF.

4. Ken Shamrock will win, lose, and win the Intercontinental title, but fall short in his bid for the World title. Does win, lose count? And he never made a serious bid for the World title.

5. Chyna will leave DeGeneration X and, as one of the most popular competitors in the WWF, start wrestling men in mixed matches. She'll even receive a shot at a singles title by fall. Well, we were right on target in our prediction that she'd leave DX and wrestle in mixed matches (it didn't happen until '99, though), but she didn't become popular when she left. She joined The Corporation and became less popular. Then she



MIDYEAR REPORT

and Helmsley betrayed DX at WrestleMania XV. And she didn't get any shots at a singles title.

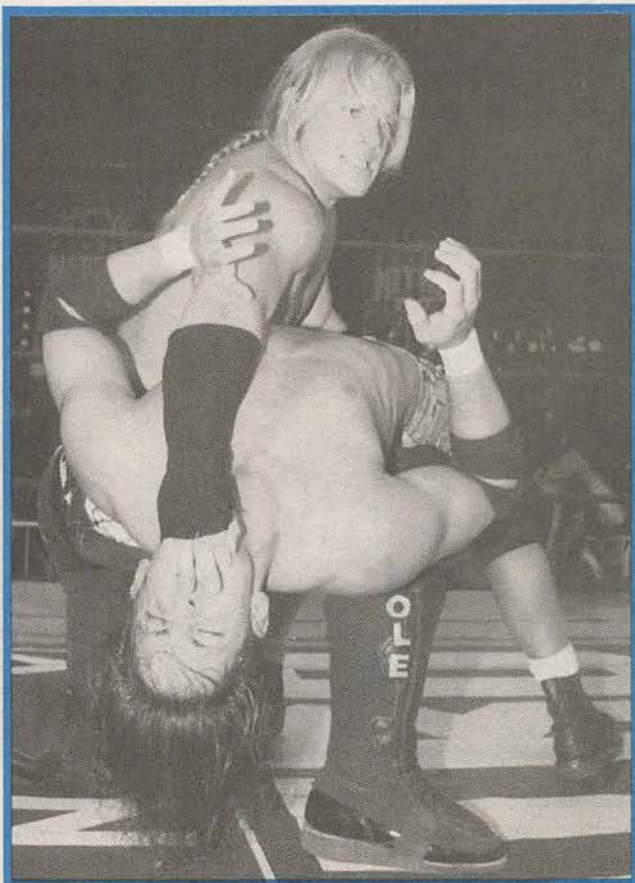
SO, WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, FIVE PREDICTIONS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 1999

1. Steve Austin will end the year as WWF World champion. He keeps on finding ways to frustrate McMahon. Now he's more determined than ever to hold on to the belt, and experienced enough to find a way.

2. Sable and Chyna will feud. It's only a matter of time before Chyna goes after the women's title.



Chyna



Will Jericho jump?

After all, she can't be happy that Sable is considered the best female wrestler in the WWF. She thinks that distinction should belong to her, and it will, as Chyna beats Sable for the belt.

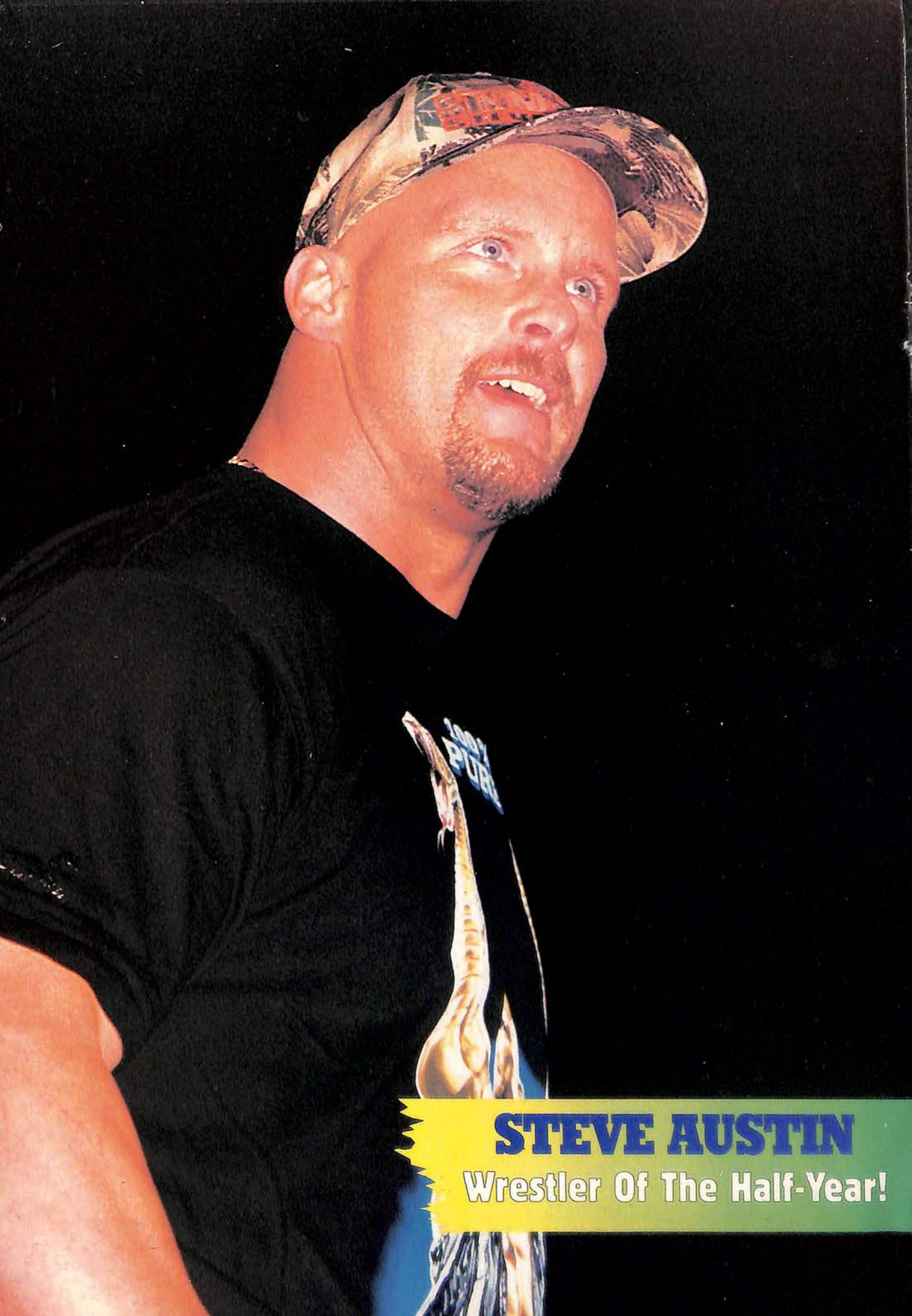
3. Paul Wight will turn against Austin and go after the World title. But he'll fall short. Although Wight won the WCW World title as a rookie, he has been inconsistent since and will be no match for Austin.

4. The WWF's ratings dominance will continue. We don't think the WWF has peaked. We think *Raw* is getting more popular by the day. And we haven't seen WCW make enough moves for its *Nitro* to compete with *Raw*.

5. Chris Jericho will sign with the WWF by August and win the Intercontinental title by Survivor Series. Jericho's WCW contract expires in July, and most insiders expect him to make the jump when it does. He might benefit from a change of scenery. □

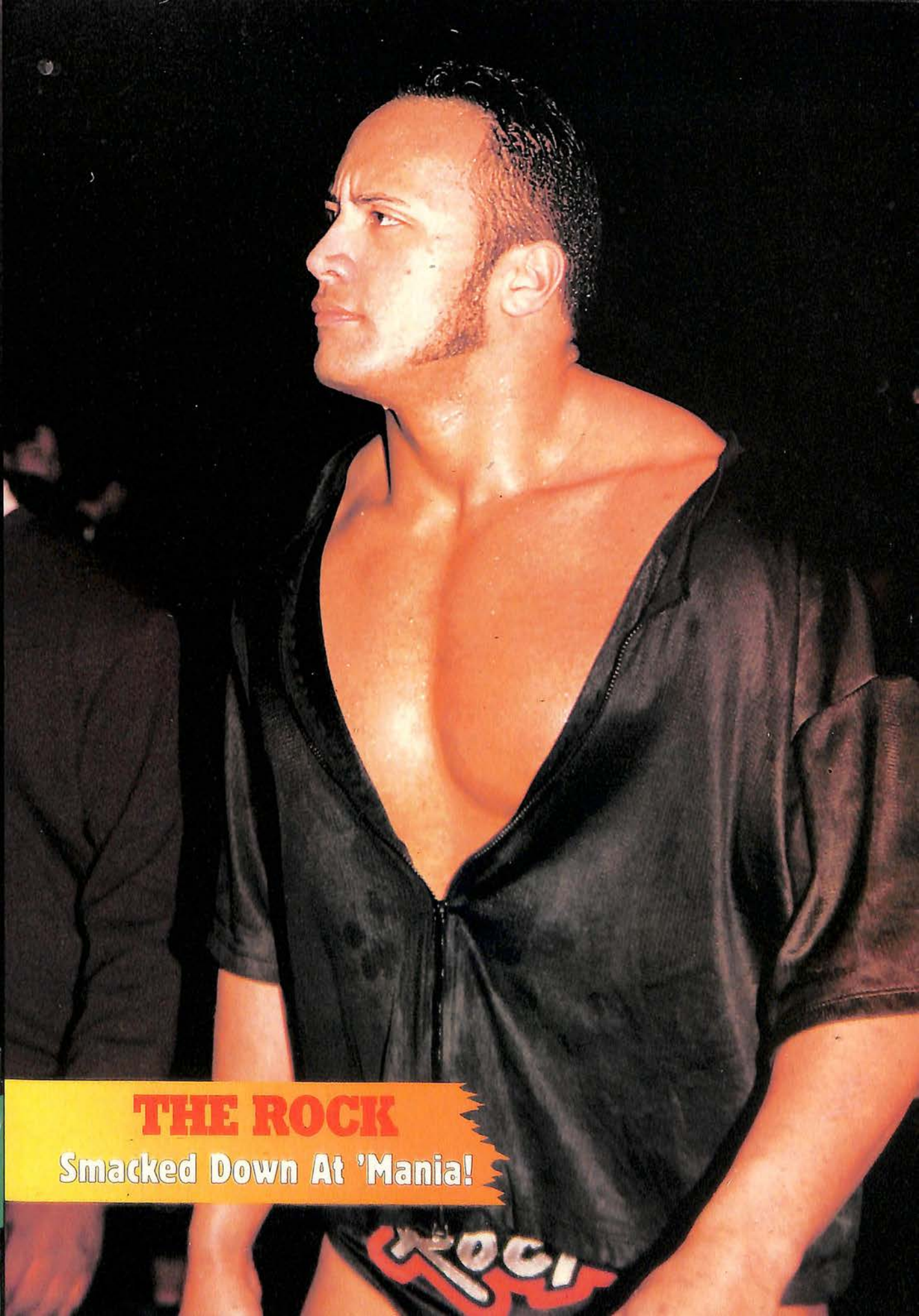
PAUL WIGHT
"Big Show" Stands Tall!





STEVE AUSTIN

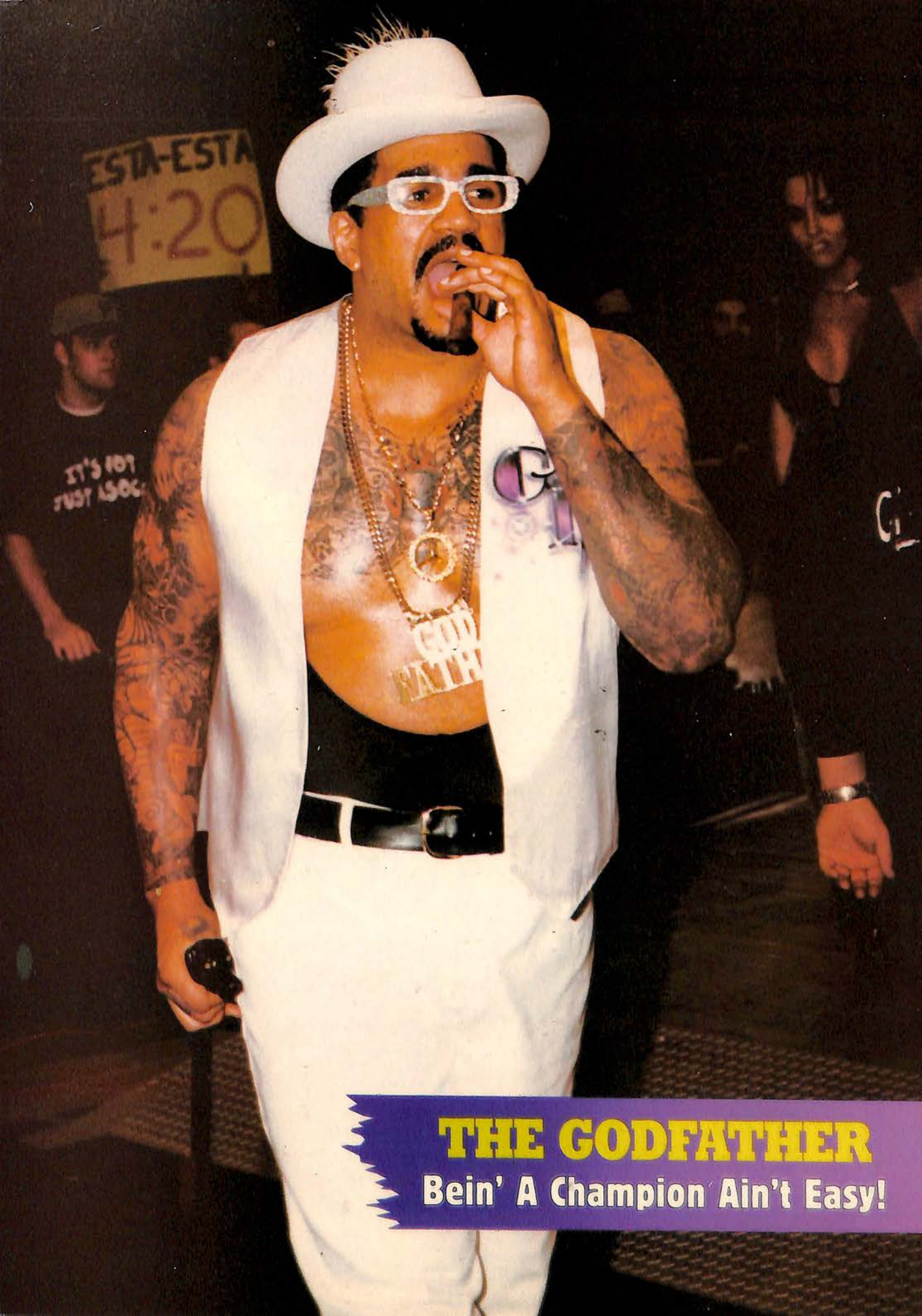
Wrestler Of The Half-Year!



THE ROCK

Smacked Down At 'Mania!

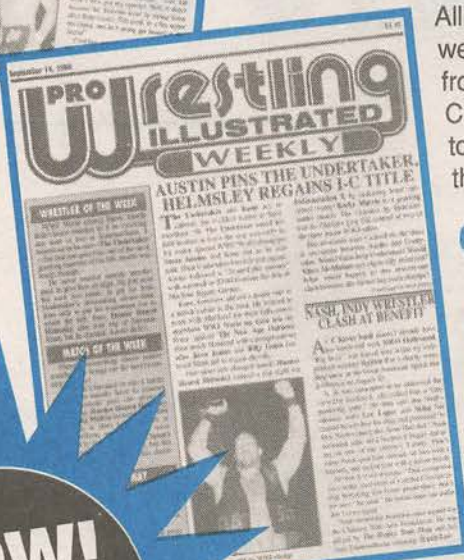
ROCK



THE GODFATHER
Bein' A Champion Ain't Easy!

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From High-Five To Nosedive ...

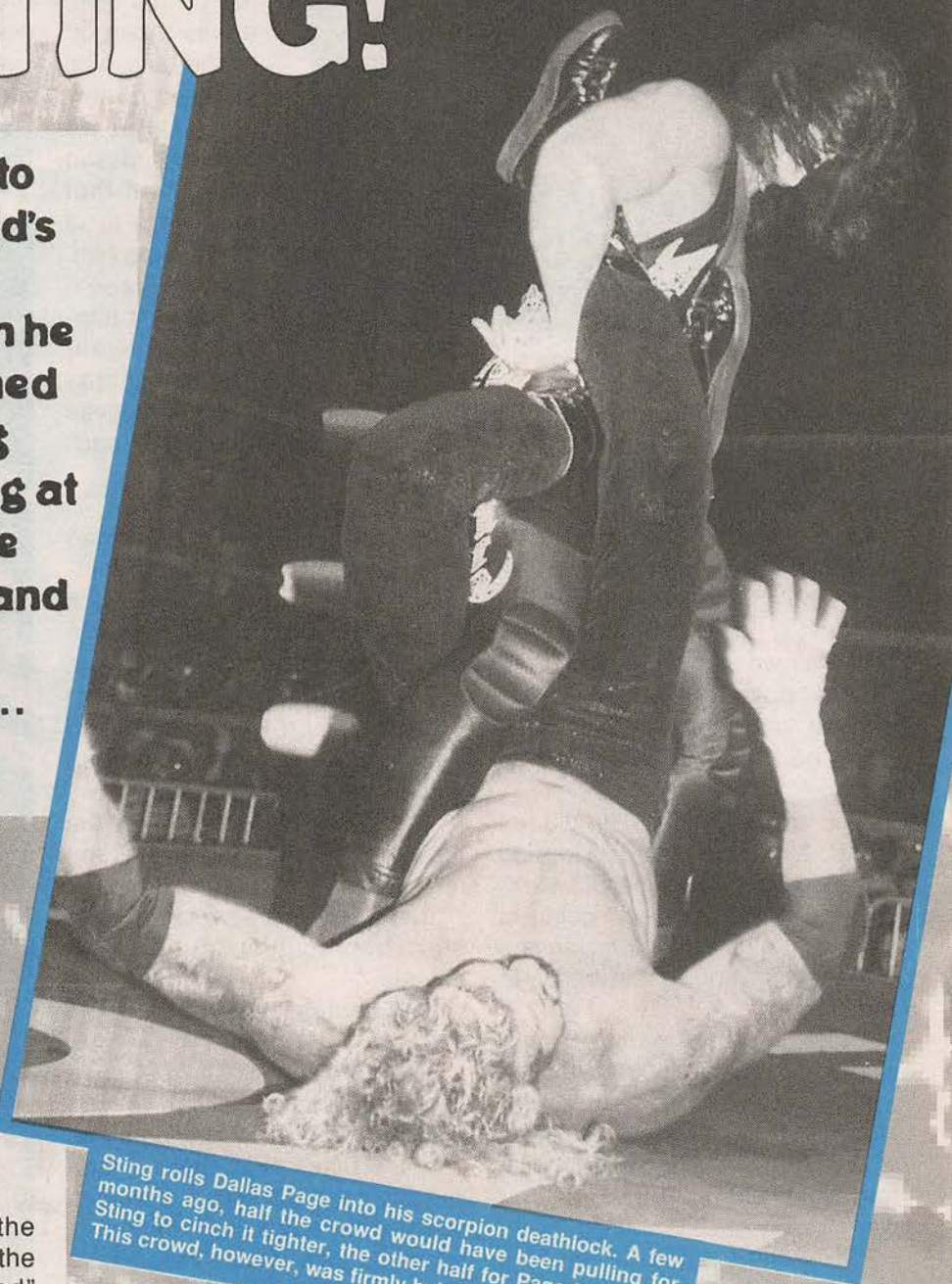
Photos by
Frank Vitucci

A black and white photograph of a man, likely a professional wrestler, with long, wavy hair and a goatee. He is wearing a black t-shirt with the word "BANG" printed in large, bold, metallic letters. Below "BANG", in smaller text, it says "WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING". He has tattoos on both arms. The background is a light, textured surface.

BANG
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

WHAT MADE DDP LASH OUT AT STING!

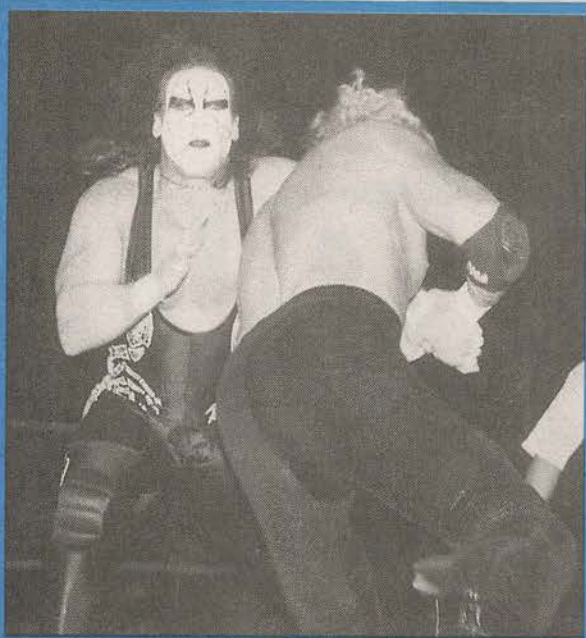
Dallas Page used to be one of the world's most popular wrestlers. But then he saw what happened when he and Sting returned to the ring at the same time. The fans booed Page and cheered Sting. He didn't know why ... but he was angry



By Dave Rosenbaum

THE WIN WAS there, the belt was available for the taking, so "Diamond" Dallas Page took it. Maybe, as he said, the old DDP wouldn't

Sting rolls Dallas Page into his scorpion deathlock. A few months ago, half the crowd would have been pulling for Sting to cinch it tighter, the other half for Page to escape. This crowd, however, was firmly behind Sting.



Page rams a shoulder into Sting, the man who has seemingly taken his place in the hearts of the fans. Page cannot understand why the fans welcomed back Sting but responded so tepidly to his return.

have made the pin, but this was the new DDP—a man who had suddenly decided that fair play never got him anywhere ... that twice he was the third runner-up for Most Popular Wrestler of the Year, but had never gotten his hands on the WCW World title belt. Flair was down. Page got up. DDP dropped his Diamond cutter on Flair, and three seconds later, Page had his first WCW World heavyweight title.

The crowd, by the way, did not cheer. Most WCW fans stopped cheering Page at SuperBrawl IX, so they certainly weren't going to cheer him after he took advantage of Randy Savage's interference to win the belt.

Sting, the man most of them wanted to win this four-way match for the World title, was down. Hollywood Hogan, the man they wouldn't have minded seeing win, had been eliminated. And Flair was virtually unconscious.

"Six months ago, DDP wouldn't have made the pin, but fair play never got me anywhere, so I took advantage of the situation," Page

said afterward. "I got the damn belt, and that's all that matters. In case you haven't figured it out, I ain't wearing the white hat anymore."

Yeah, we figured it out, except Page didn't remove the white hat on his own. It was taken off by the fans, who stopped cheering him for no apparent reason other than that they were tired of cheering him. As for Page's motives for turning bad, well, they sound sus-

piciously like Bret Hart's motives for turning bad in the WWF back in 1997.

To recap:

1. Fans start cheering a man who normally would be considered a bad guy. In the WWF back in 1997, it was "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin who got Bret Hart angry. In WCW in 1999, it was Scott Steiner, a man who had stalked Kimberly, DDP's wife, and even pushed her out of a moving car.

2. Wrestler tries to convince the fans they're cheering the wrong man.

3. Fans ignore wrestler and start booing him louder than before.

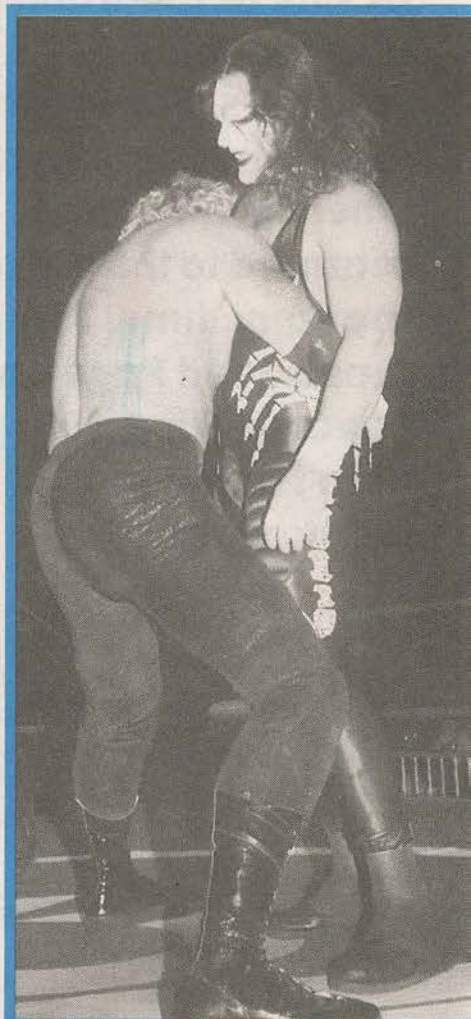
4. Wrestler says, "Screw the fans."

"I am no longer the people's champion," Page declared at *Nitro* on March 29. "I don't understand how the fans could cheer a man like Steiner, who threw a woman out of a car and insults them on a regular basis. Don't these fans have any standards? Don't they know the difference between good and evil? Well, if they're cheering

a man like Steiner, then I don't want to be cheered by them. That's guilt by association."

That wasn't the only thing that got DDP angry. At the March 29 *Nitro*, Page made his first appearance in a WCW ring since SuperBrawl more than a month earlier. He had been healing an injury that resulted from a Steiner recliner and filming a movie in Australia. His return should have been heralded by WCW and anticipated by the fans. But Page's return was overshadowed by the return of an even bigger superstar: Sting, who hadn't appeared on TV since Halloween Havoc the previous fall.

"I don't get that," Page said.

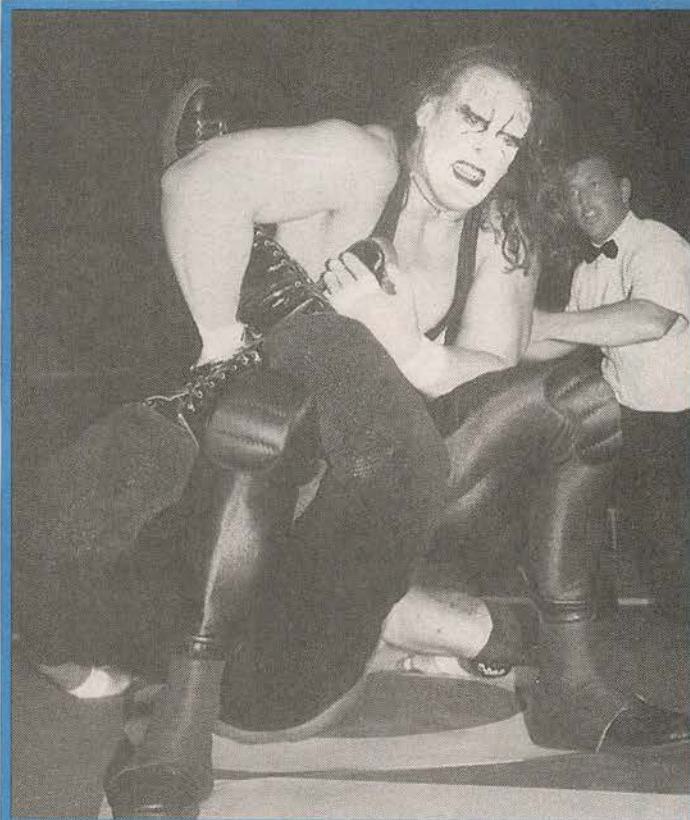


It might appear as if he is trying to squeeze the life out of Sting, but DDP has used his jealousy constructively. He's channeled his anger into two WCW World title victories.



Sting has become Page's greatest adversary in the ring and actually defeated him for the World title on April 26, but Page's pride demanded that he get the belt back, which he did the very same night on *Nitro*.

For years, DDP and Sting both represented WCW with pride, but now they are entrenched in a grueling feud. Page has allowed his bitterness to destroy a friendship.



"That was the second time in two years that Sting just ran off and left. I've never left, only this one time when I got hurt, and even then I probably came back sooner than I should have. I've always been loyal to WCW and the fans. But then I see everybody getting all excited about Sting's return, what color face paint he's gonna be wearing, who's side he's going to be on, whether or not he can win the World title again, but nobody's saying a word about DDP. I was the one who was putting my butt on the line every night taking on the NWO without anybody's help. Where was Sting? Who cares what side he's on!"

Page wasn't any happier after

he lost via submission to Sting's scorpion deathlock on March 31 in Baltimore. The loss enraged him further, mostly because the fans cheered Sting.

"I don't see why he's such a hero to everybody," Page complained. "I just don't get these people. They're either too stupid or too fickle, I don't know which, but whatever it is, I'm not bothering with them anymore."

The fans are, as Page said, a fickle bunch. They change constantly. Ten years ago, who would have ever guessed that men like Steve Austin, The Undertaker, and Mankind would be cheered, while men like Bret Hart and Page are booed. Many insiders think the fans are booing

Page because he tried too hard to be their champion and always insisted on telling everyone that he wrestled hurt. Scott Steiner is cheered—at least everywhere but Tacoma, Washington, where referred to the fans as stupid rednecks—because he captures their imagination. Wrestling has become a TV show, a nighttime soap opera. The fans value entertainment over virtue. Sting combines both: He's entertaining and he's honest.

"No more honest than me," Page complained. "No more entertaining, either. If you ask me, the fans have just lost their minds."

Maybe so. And that's why Page has lost his. □

SHANE'S SILENT MESSAGE TO JUSTIN CREDIBLE:



Shane Douglas and Justin Credible are squaring off in a war to determine who really is "The Franchise" of ECW. Credible has a lot of proving to do.

Photos by Frank Vitucci

When Shane Douglas looks at Justin Credible, he sees a man a lot like himself. But for Credible to prove himself worthy of becoming the new "Franchise" of ECW, he's going to have to survive the most brutal fight of his life

ble could look at the man behind that "Franchise" label, he could finally understand the nature of his hatred and the roots of this explosive feud. He could finally see what Douglas realized long ago: that both men are traveling a parallel path to greatness, and that Justin Credible is the heir apparent to Douglas' legacy.

In the mid-1980s, a lean, clean-cut Douglas debuted in the now-defunct UWF. His good looks and

By Dan Murphy

JUSTIN CREDIBLE DOES not know Shane Douglas. Sure, Credible is familiar with the four-time ECW heavyweight

champ, and he knows him well enough to want nothing more than to end his career. But Credible doesn't see how Shane Douglas clawed his way up to become "The Franchise" of ECW. If Credi-

PROVE YOU'RE WORTHY AND THE FRANCHISE IS YOURS

That Douglas can execute such brutal maneuvers after absorbing such a bloody beating is proof that he deserves to remain ECW's "Franchise" at least for the time being. But he knows he won't be able to wrestle that much longer.

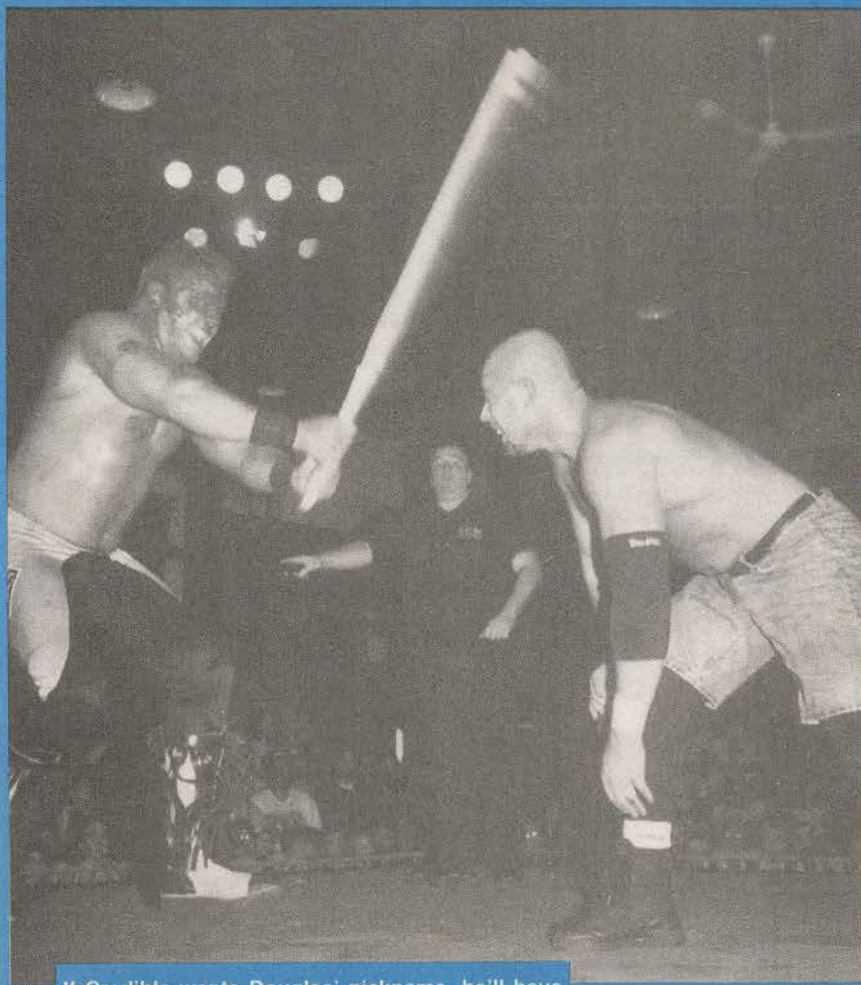


quick smile made him a fan favorite, and his precision drop-kicks and knowledge of wrestling fundamentals made him stand out from the crowd. After experiencing some success there, Douglas entered WCW. Though he and Johnny Ace enjoyed moderate success as The Dynamic Dudes, and Shane won the WCW World tag team title with Rick Steamboat in 1992, he was frustrated with his career direction.

A brief stint in the WWF hadn't helped, either, and Douglas took what many considered a step backward when he signed with the fledgling Eastern Championship Wrestling in 1993.

In ECW, Douglas faced a wider variety of opponents than before. He battled greats such as Jimmy Snuka, Don Muraco, Terry Funk, and Tito Santana, and promising up-and-comers including Tommy Dreamer, Sabu, and The Sandman. He learned from the influx of talent in ECW. He added muscle mass and abandoned aspects of his aerial repertoire for a ground-based attack. He perfected the belly-to-belly suplex he had learned from Magnum T.A. years earlier.

Most importantly, he gained confidence ... and developed an attitude. He learned that the competition in ECW was just as fierce as the competition in WCW and the WWF. Douglas was able to

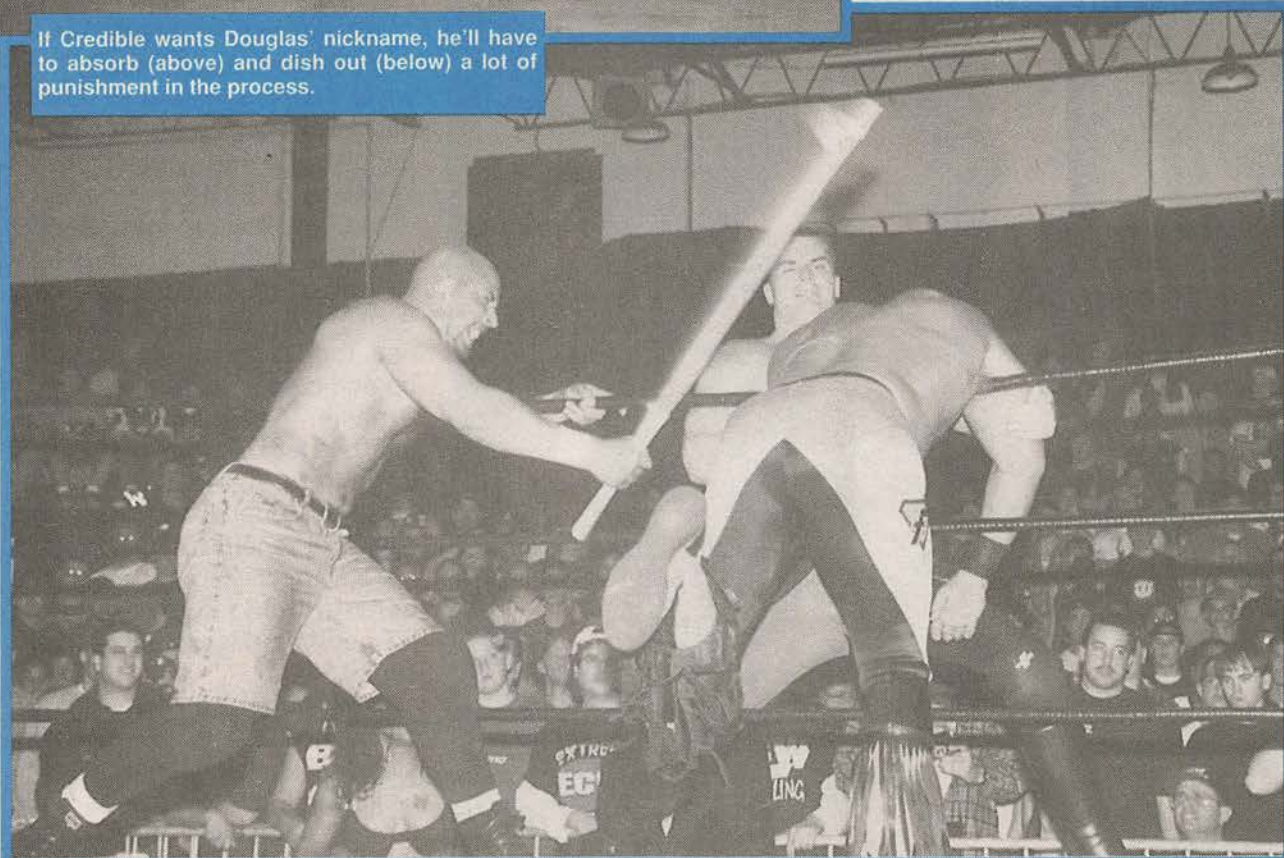


If Credible wants Douglas' nickname, he'll have to absorb (above) and dish out (below) a lot of punishment in the process.

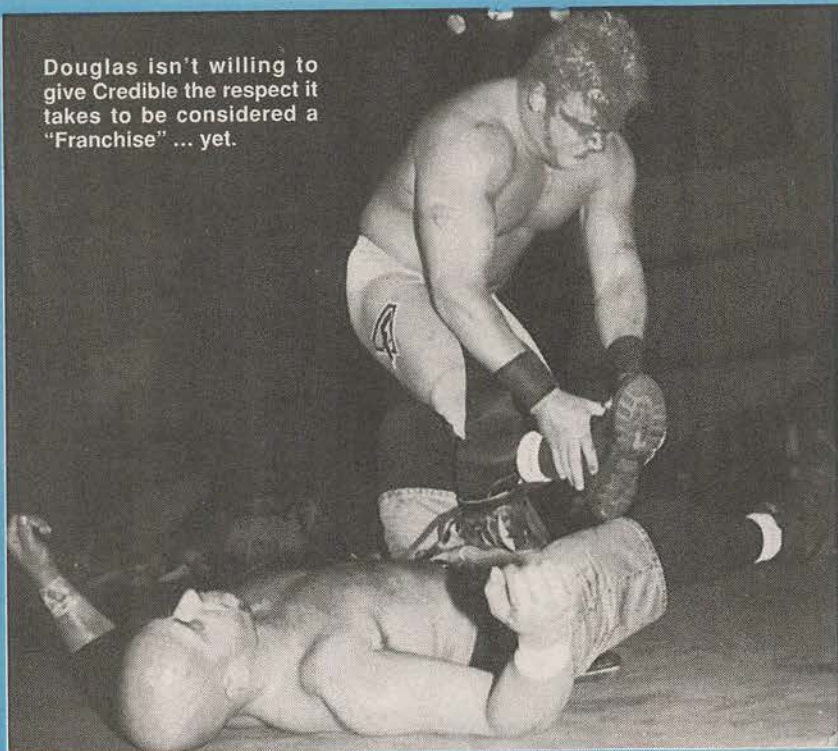
improve and learn outside the Big Two spotlights that have ruined so many careers. When Eastern Championship Wrestling became Extreme Championship Wrestling in 1994, Douglas was the ideal standard-bearer to usher in a new era not only in ECW's history, but in the history of the sport.

As all this was happening in ECW, a good-looking aerial wrestler with a precision dropkick was becoming frustrated with his career direction. Then known as Aldo Montoya, Credible was unable to make an impact on the WWF title picture. He fled the WWF and reinvented himself in the USWA, where he formed a moderately successful association with PG-13, but Credible remained unhappy and soon signed with ECW.

Like Douglas, Credible hit Philadelphia full of anger and brash confidence. He surrounded himself with a stable of yes-men and supplemented his traditional skills with brawling and rulebreak-



Douglas isn't willing to give Credible the respect it takes to be considered a "Franchise" ... yet.



ing. He targeted Mikey Whipwreck and sent him packing to WCW. Ditto Sandman.

And when Douglas was about to announce his retirement early this year, Credible decided it was time to target "The Franchise." Credible expected Shane to anoint him the new "Franchise," and when he chose Dreamer instead, Credible lashed out at Douglas, Dreamer, and Francine.

You see, while Credible has surpassed expectations in ECW, there's an intangible that Douglas experienced, and that Credible has not.

"It's pain," Douglas asserted. "This sport is all about adversity. It's about taking the losses as well as the wins and learning from your mistakes. That punk doesn't seem to take what happens from bell to bell seriously; he's content just to be the center of attention. What ticks me off the most is that Justin Credible has a lot of potential, but he's not ready. I'm going to teach him what pain is all about!"

In other words, Credible has to prove himself to Douglas if he wants to become the new "Franchise" of ECW. Over the past few

years, Douglas has raised the bar on what it means to be "The Franchise." He has competed when seriously injured. He has taken on all challengers. He has excelled on his own, without The Triple Threat watching his back. Even ECW champion Taz has given Douglas his respect. Credible, on the other hand, has opted to team with Lance Storm in a dual effort to force Douglas from the sport.

Though Douglas isn't about to come right out and say it, his message is clear: If Credible can learn from my example, and elevate his game as I did, he has what it takes to become the new "Franchise" and remain the man to beat in ECW long after I'm gone. He can be even better than Dreamer. But to do so, Credible must come to learn and respect the history of ECW. He must be willing to stand on his own when the time comes. And, most importantly, he must cleanly defeat Douglas. If he is able to do so, he would become "The Franchise."

The battle for "The Franchise" is likely to be among the most violent spectacles in ECW history.

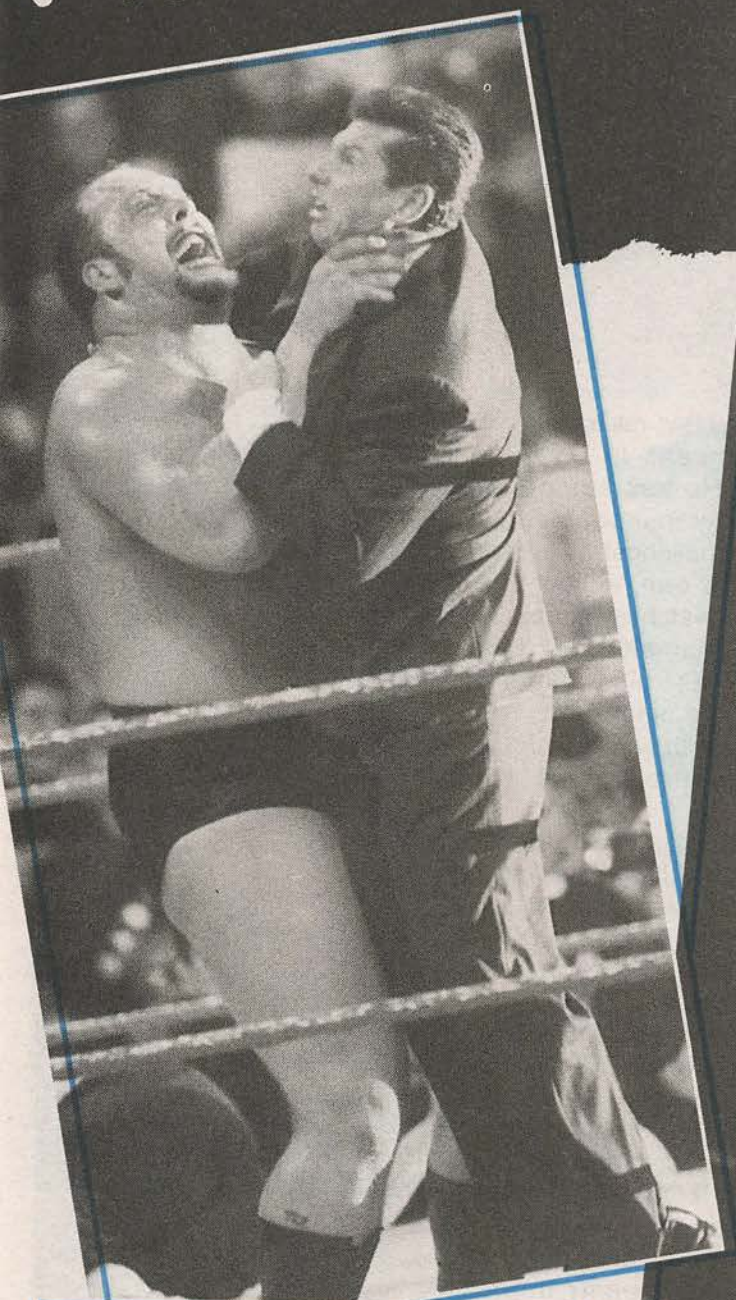
Douglas does not seem entirely ready to relinquish his unofficial title, especially to a man who smashed a rattan cane into the mouth of Francine. The last man who injured Shane's head cheerleader was Bam Bam Bigelow, and Douglas responded by overcoming a 100-pound-plus weight disadvantage to regain the ECW title from him. In this feud, Douglas holds every advantage. Credible is going to need everything he's got just to survive.

But if he does, he will have earned the honor that Douglas considers the greatest prize of his career, even if it's against "The Franchise's" will. □

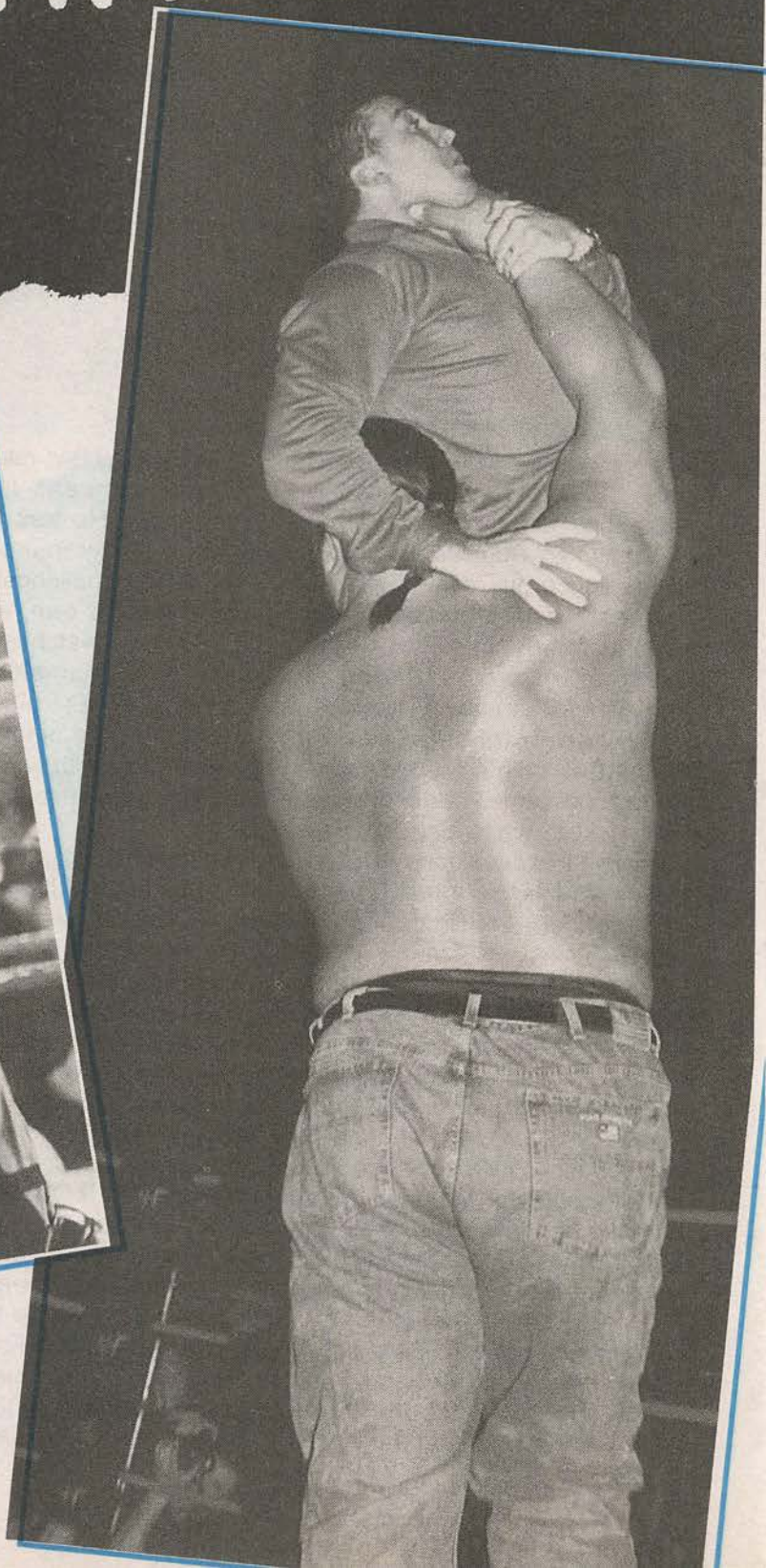


To his credit, Credible has come a long way since his days in the WWF as Aldo Montoya. But can he rule ECW the way Douglas has?

THE WIGHT STUFF

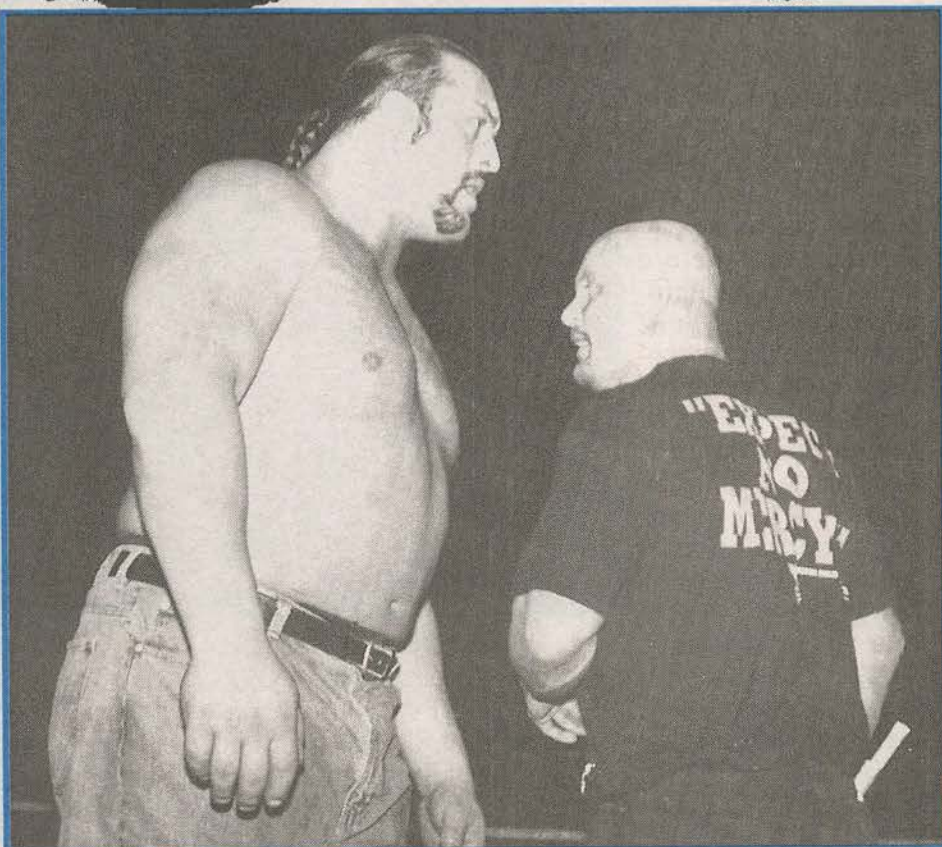


When Vince McMahon got in Paul Wight's face at WrestleMania, he paid dearly for it (above). Shane McMahon has also underestimated the power of "The Big Show" (right). Wight could still be a threat to both father and son.



How "The Big Show" Made Fools Of The McMahons

Vince McMahon offered money, a long-term contract, and a high-profile job to Paul Wight. But "The Big Show" thumbed his nose at The Corporation. Now Shane McMahon is wondering what went wrong ... and even Vince has to wonder if he can trust the big guy



Steve Austin made a very wise decision when he formed an alliance with Wight. "The Big Show" has shown everyone what he can do to opponents who make him angry.

By Bryan Ethier

NOT SINCE DAVID and Goliath shared a decanter of espresso at halftime of the ancient Mesopotamia Goodwill Games have two stars as dissimi-

lar as Paul Wight and Steve Austin come together to forge a partnership. But there they were, the 7', 500-pound giant and his relatively diminutive former nemesis, sharing a couple of brewskies.

Ah, how a common enemy can



Some insiders believe that even though Wight was on McMahon's side (left and below) when Vince signed him to a WWF deal, he wasn't planning on staying with him for long. Can Vince really trust Wight to help him now?

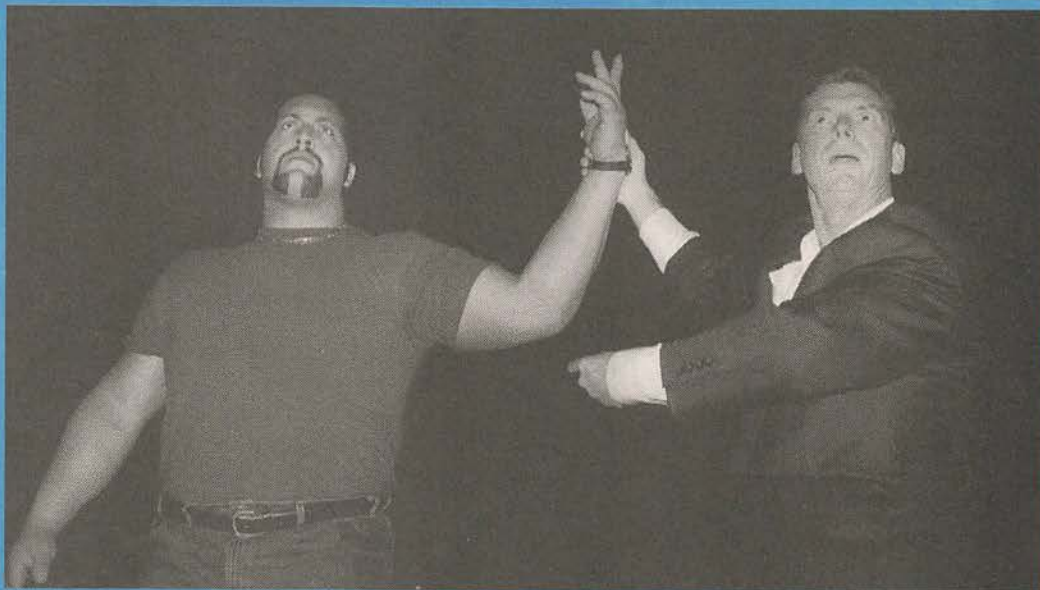
create a workable marriage between former foes.

You might recall the night fate brought this unlikely couple together. Moments before their suds o' celebration, "The Big Show" and Austin had collaborated on the destruction of the WWF's giant TV screen, the Titantron. After hauling down the screen (which weighs about as much as a 12th century Greek amphitheater), Wight

watched with detached amusement as "Stone-Cold" ripped the screen to shreds with a large pole that resembled a mutated knitting needle.

What inspired the collaborators of such chicanery? A mutual disdain for everyone associated with the mighty Corporation, especially one Shane McMahon.

"Stone-Cold's" battles with the WWF's co-owner—and for a time, Shane's father—have been well-chronicled. But Wight, initially considered Vince McMahon's newest sentinel, developed into one of the federation's hottest commodities by spurning Vince



and his son, Shane.

What happened?

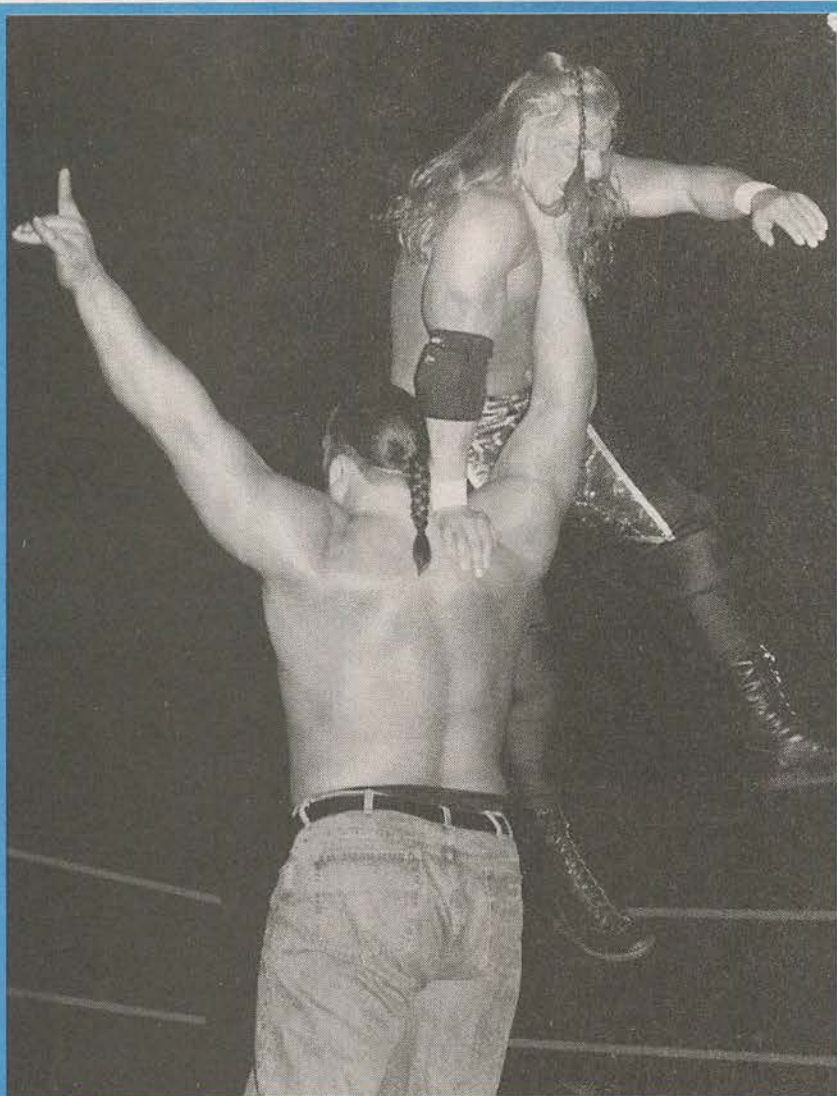
"I hate to say this, but I think Vince's ego got the better of him this time," said Pat Patterson. "When 'The Big Show' came to The Corporation, the group began to fall apart. Then they had that public breakout, and Paul Wight stormed off. And Vince got all caught up with Stephanie's problems with The Ministry of Darkness. He's a good dad, but maybe he forgot about the people who got him where he is. Then through all this crap, Shane turned into a ruler with unlimited power."

Patterson and Gerald Brisco

were fired by the junior McMahon, who called them "dead weight." But both were loyal employees who asked for little ... and were rewarded even less. They stood by their long-time friend and employer when times were bleak. Conversely, Wight expected a great deal from McMahon, stood by for a fraction of a moment, and bolted on McMahon when the heat was turned up.

"When 'The Big Show' came to the WWF, he came here to make a difference," said Wight. "No one plays games with Paul Wight."

To be accurate, no one plays games with Paul Wight and gets



"The Big Show" has already made this much very clear: Hunter Hearst Helmsley is no ally of his! Same goes for everyone else on Shane McMahon's team.

away with it. Vince McMahon learned that lesson. From the day he introduced Wight as a Corporate bodyguard, McMahon let Wight know who the boss was. But anyone who knows Wight understands why he is called "The Big Show."

"Paul Wight is every bit as egotistical and strong-willed as Vince McMahon," said Mankind. "You gotta respect a guy who stands up for what he believes in. He's a good guy to have in our Union."

It took only about a week of subjugation for Wight to reach his boiling point with Vince McMahon and his Corporation. A rapidly deteriorating relationship between

boss and bodyguard exploded the night of WrestleMania, when McMahon slapped Wight in the face and publicly castigated him for losing to Mankind. Wight responded by viciously attacking his boss, severing their working relationship.

In retrospect, a quick Tuesday-to-Tuesday business marriage between McMahon and Wight should have surprised no one, say some wrestling insiders.

"I have no doubt Paul Wight had no intention of staying with Vince," said a WWF employee who spoke under terms of anonymity. "Vince was Paul's usher through the WWF's front door,

and Paul was smart enough to harness his ego until he established himself on his own. As for this Union thing he's involved with now, I'm not sure that's a long-term thing, either."

One thing that is certain is that Wight entered the WWF looking to re-establish his name and reputation after struggling late in his term with WCW. The former WCW World champ had been eclipsed by upstart Bill Goldberg and mainstays "Diamond" Dallas Page and Hollywood Hogan. So when McMahon offered him money, prestige, and a visible role in his group, Wight bit at the bait ... but he never swallowed it. "The Big Show" was preparing for his own show.

Maybe Shane, as pompous as he is, recognized that.

"Shane always saw Paul Wight as a lit bomb ready to explode," said Gerald Brisco. "Mr. McMahon seemed to take Wight's loyalty for granted, but Shane kept saying, 'You guys gotta keep this big guy happy. It wouldn't be good for The Corporation if Wight turned against us.' I think Shane had an idea that Paul was not always being honest with Mr. McMahon, but there was nothing he could do."

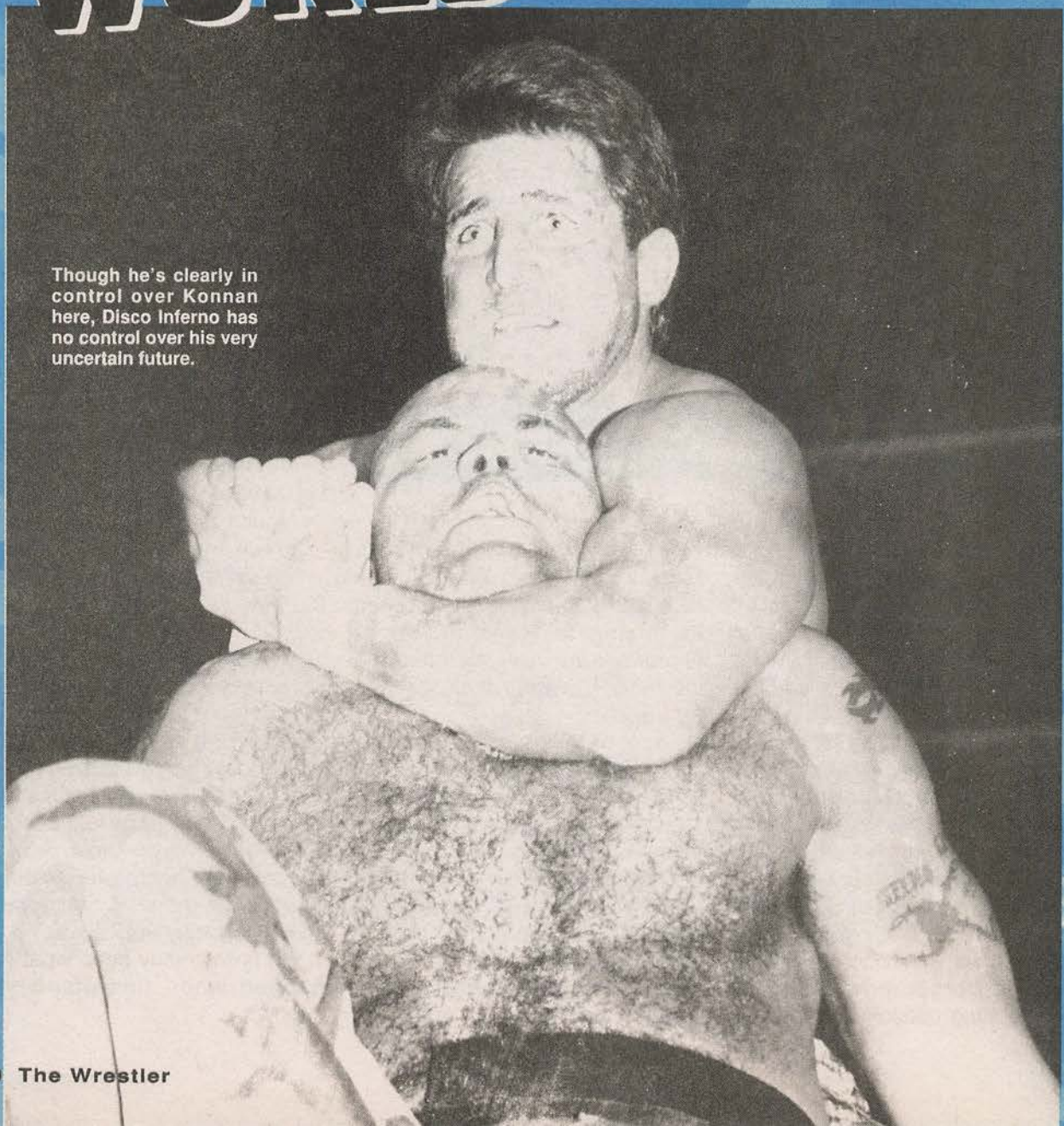
And there's not much the elder McMahon can do now with the exception of pray that Wight has forgiven him for embarrassing Wight at WrestleMania and pray that he remains loyal to this Union.

Members of Shane McMahon's Corporation would be wise to look over their shoulders now that Wight's "Big Show" is gaining a full head of steam. But again, so would Vince. For now that his feud with The Undertaker has become a full-blown war—now that he needs Wight again—he holds no power over the man. Vince must keep him happy at all costs.

He has already seen what can happen when this giant isn't happy. □

DISCO'S HELLISH INFERNO: LIFE IN THE NO WORLD ORDER

Though he's clearly in control over Konnan here, Disco Inferno has no control over his very uncertain future.

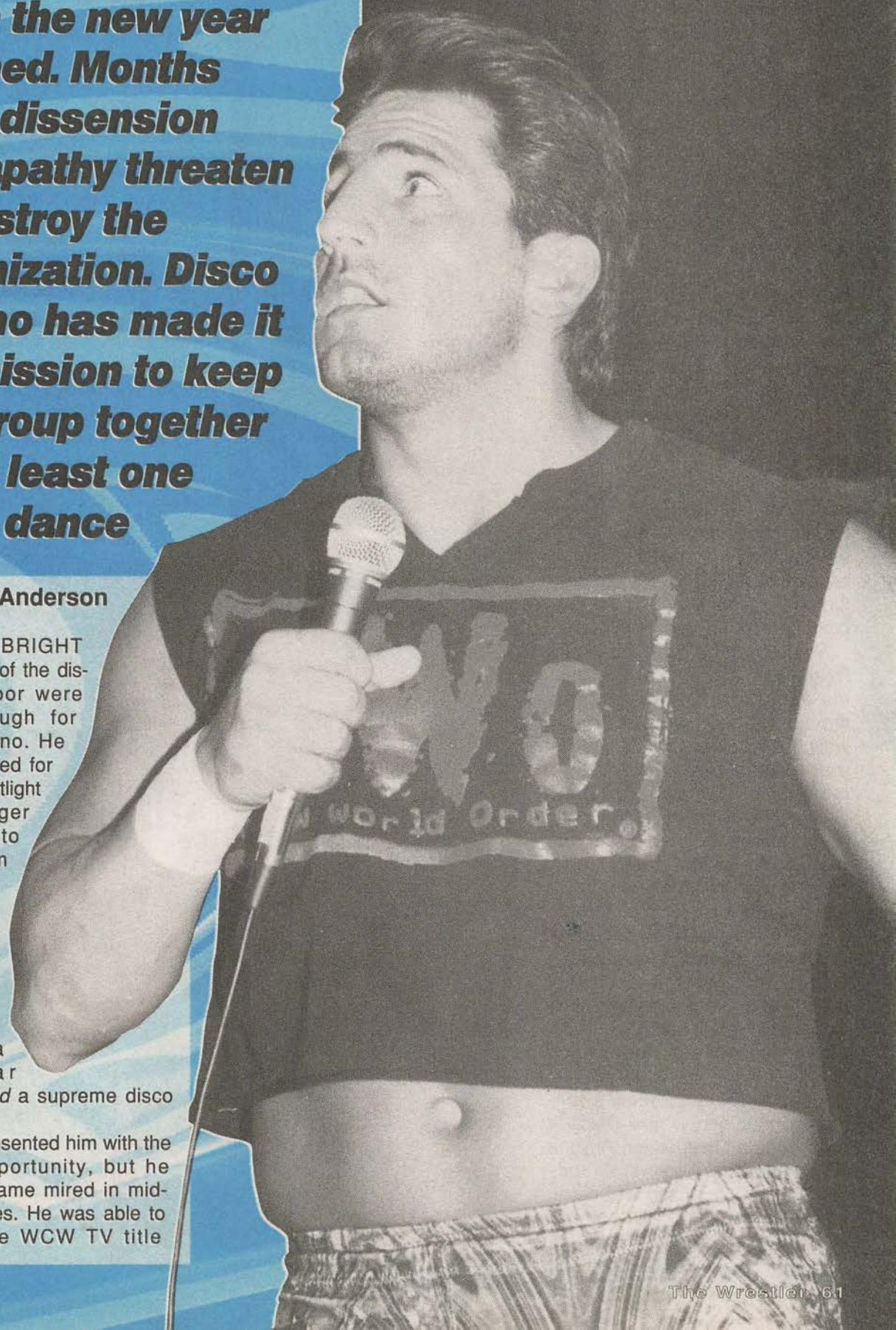


The New World Order was reborn when the new year dawned. Months later, dissension and apathy threaten to destroy the organization. Disco Inferno has made it his mission to keep the group together for at least one more dance

By Steve Anderson

THE BRIGHT lights of the disco floor were never enough for Disco Inferno. He always longed for a larger spotlight with a larger audience to watch him shake his booty. So professional wrestling became his calling. He figured he could be a superstar grappler and a supreme disco dancer.

WCW presented him with the perfect opportunity, but he quickly became mired in mid-card matches. He was able to capture the WCW TV title



twice, sure, but the main event bouts always went to others. He tried and tried to ascend that ladder, but momentum never stayed on his side for long. He couldn't quite find his rhythm.

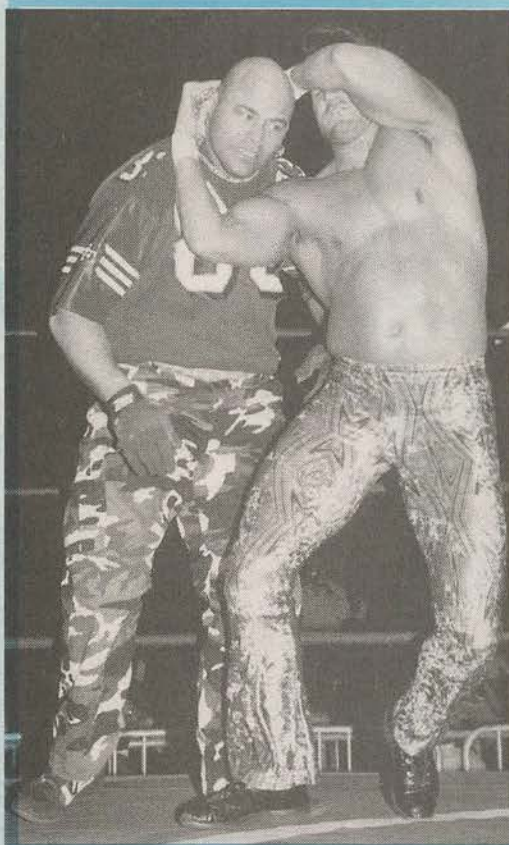
Just as everything seemed beyond bleak, Disco got a call from Scott Hall and Kevin Nash. They were in need of an associate, though some would say they were in need of a flunky. The New World Order (Wolfpac version) had just reunited, and all the attention of the wrestling world was focused on the group. Disco had his chance to shine and associate with the true movers and shakers.

"When I got that call from Scott and 'Big Sexy,' I could hardly contain my enthusiasm," Disco recalled. "To be part of an elite organization like the NWO would be a dream come true for anyone, right?"

While he took many beatings for the team, Disco was finally in his element. He was hanging around with the main-eventers. It wasn't long before he proved his mettle and became a full-fledged member of the group, proudly wearing the colors of the Wolfpac.

But just as he was settling in, the group began to splinter. Members of the black and white were left to fend for themselves. The Wolfpac started to break apart with Scott Steiner turning against Buff Bagwell, Scott Hall taking yet *another* sabbatical, and Hollywood Hogan and Kevin Nash raising suspicions about each other.

First a flunky ... then a full-fledged member ... now Disco is reduced to a cheerleader. Anyone who wears NWO colors, be they black and white or red and black, has been greeted by an enthusiastic Disco. He shouts "NWO for

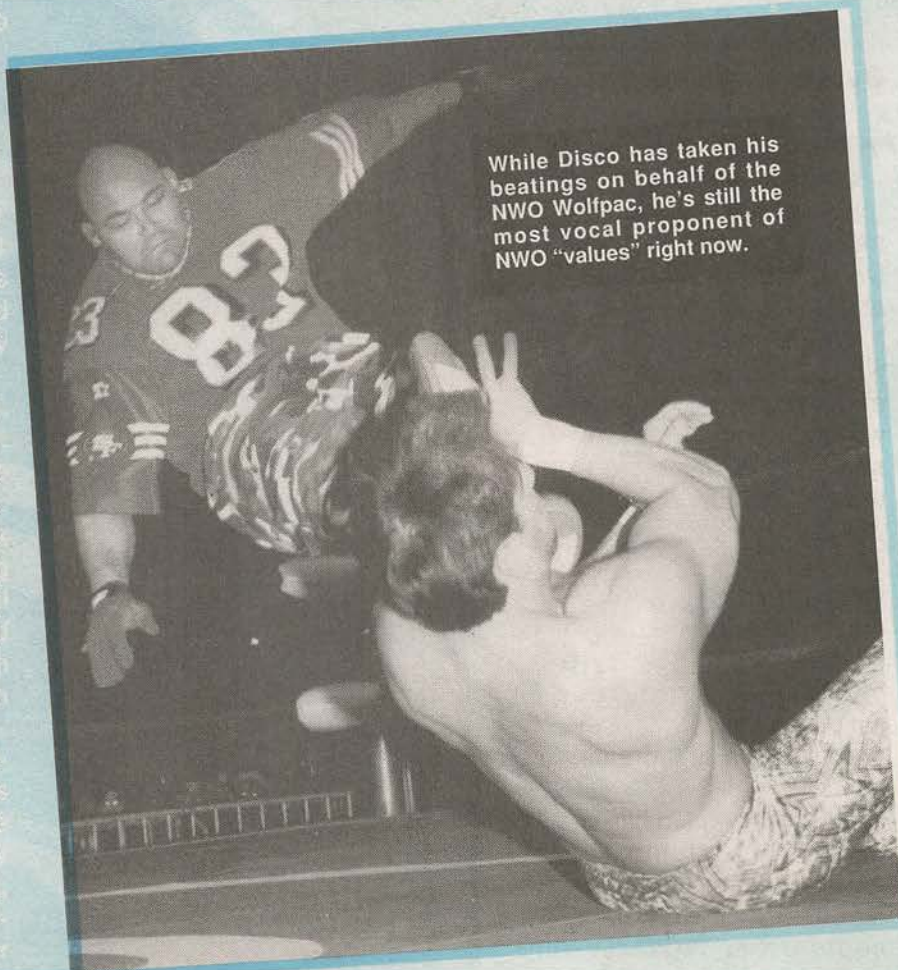


Disco has received more attention as an NWO member than he had at any other time in his career. He likes it, but it might soon be all over.

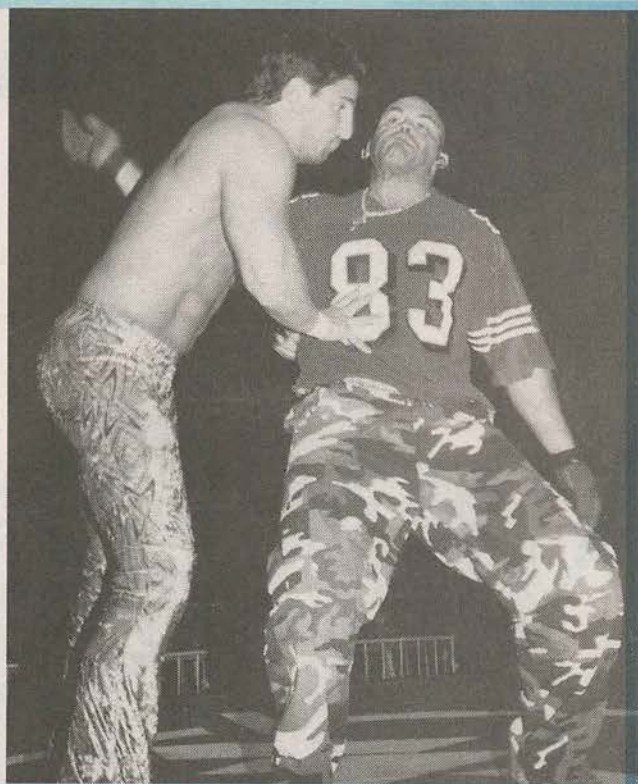
life!" when few are willing to put those words together anymore. In what seems like a state of desperation, Disco congratulates his victorious brethren and consoles those who come up short. He follows them all the way to the dressing room, offering his undying support.

"Look, I consider myself to be a very positive person," said Disco. "So I try to turn around any negative. What's going on right now with the NWO is just a phase. It's nothing more than growing pains. Nothing to worry about ... really."

Can Disco unify the NWO when more prominent members seem to be content to allow the organization to crumble? At press time, Hogan is out with a knee injury.



While Disco has taken his beatings on behalf of the NWO Wolfpac, he's still the most vocal proponent of NWO "values" right now.



"The NWO, like disco, will never die!" says Disco. That could be the final nail in the NWO's coffin!



The NWO is Disco's entire identity at the current time. It's not likely that his career would flourish were the NWO to dissolve completely.

Kevin Nash is the World heavy-weight champion. Scott Steiner has reached his singles peak with his first U.S. title victory. He doesn't seem to care what everyone else does. The NWO's leaders are looking out for their own interests, not the future of the group.

For Disco, the survival of the NWO is directly tied to his career survival. TV title reigns could not get him the attention he needed. A tag team with Alex Wright was doomed to fail from the start. The NWO is Disco's entire identity right now. More important than platform shoes and polyester suits, Disco is truly NWO for life.

"I didn't get to this level of my career to allow a little dissension spoil it all," mused Disco. "I'm living my dream. I'm part of the most elite group in professional wrestling. I am and always will be NWO for life!"

Now ... if only the other members felt the same.

In reality, Hogan, Nash, and Steiner don't need the NWO any-

more. The group has outlived its usefulness as a renegade organization. WCW is willing to live with the group, even going so far as billing pay-per-views as WCW/NWO presents Halloween Havoc, Starrcade, etc. The high-profile members are superstars with or without the common bond.

Unfortunately for Disco Inferno, the spotlight might not follow him if the group dissolves. First, he has not been in the organization for long, so any personal momentum built up by his association with the NWO will be quickly gone. Second, WCW may not be as willing to feature Disco in video vignettes or title matches if he doesn't have his soon-to-be former colleagues by his side.

So if his dance card is indeed open, what is the next step for Disco Inferno? Does he latch on to another group? Does he find a tag team partner who can bring him the attention equal to that attracted by the NWO?

Or, like the music style he

embraces, will he continue to wear the shirt long after it goes out of style? Will he still give the Wolfpac and "4 Life" signs when few will remember what it means?

Questions posed to a man with a questionable future. He has put so much passion and dedication into the reinvented NWO. He has been a solid supporter while others around him fussed, feuded, and wavered in their loyalty. He is there with a kind word and a slap on the back, but he may be praying for the survival of a group that is desperate need of a mercy killing.

"Hey, there are some things that will just go on and on," said Disco. "First, of course, disco. It'll rule forever. Second, the NWO. Even if I'm the last one standing and shaking my booty to that Wolfpac music, the NWO, like disco, will never die."

Whatever the future holds for the man who already lives in the past, it may very well be without the red and black. □

Photos by Steve Bryant

One thing is certain: The Fabulous Ones, Stan Lane and Steve Keirn don't have as much hair now (right) as they did 15 years ago (opposite page). That doesn't mean they're no longer capable of winning titles, however.

"ONE OF THE 10 GREATEST Can The Fabulous Ones Still



They were among the best superstar tag teams of the 1980s, in an era that spawned The Road Warriors, The Rock 'n' Roll Express, The British Bulldogs, and The Freebirds. Can history repeat itself for Steve Keirn and Stan Lane?

By Harry Burkett

IT SEEMED LIKE 1984 all over again. Their Chippendale-style ring attire, complete with suspenders and bow ties, smacked of "80s retro night." The lines on their faces were more distinct, 15 years deeper, but their boyish good looks and down-home charisma remained strong.

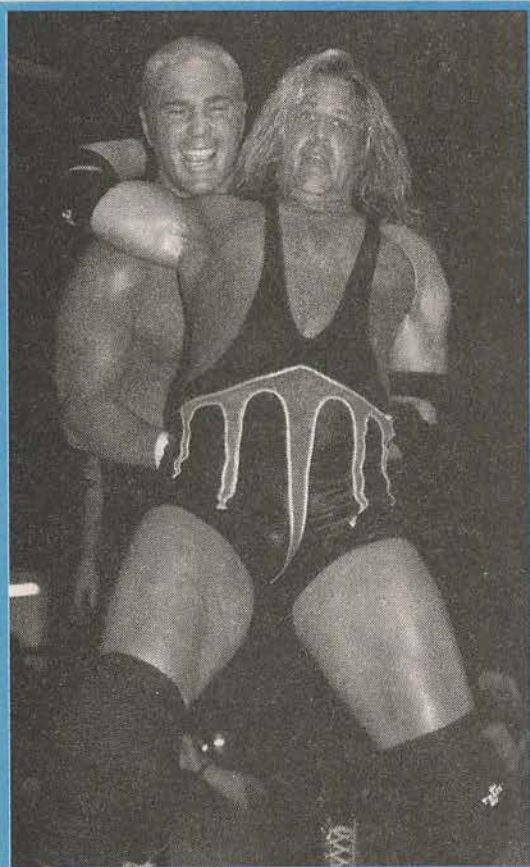
March 13, 1999, marked the official return of Steve Keirn and Stan Lane, better known as The Fabulous Ones.

To NWA Worldwide executive Bill Behrens, it meant a great day at the Nashville Fairgrounds Sports Arena, a facility that plays host to weekly Music City cards. "We still have fans filing in, and already this is the second-largest crowd in Music City history," Behrens said before the show began. "We knew it would be a good turnout, but this is a fabulous night, indeed."

That evening, The Fabulous Ones were scheduled to wrestle the NWA North American tag team champions. The only problem was that it wasn't clear who the rightful champs were. Steven Dunn

TEAMS EVER"

Make A Run For The Gold?



Dunn reaches back to try and gain control of Keirn, but this Fabulous One is too dominant. Maybe Dunn and his partner underestimated the Fabs.

As a result, the clash between The Tennessee Volz and The Fabulous Ones became a non-title bout. Dunn and Riggins, the most popular duo in Music City today, were expected to be the crowd favorites. The Fabulous Ones, who had been the most popular duo a decade and a half earlier, came across as arrogant during their prematch interviews.

But The Fabulous Ones had reason to be cocky. Managed by Jackie Fargo, Keirn and Lane emerged as arguably the state's hottest young stars in 1982, capturing the Southern tag team title 14 times.

By mid-1984, Keirn and Lane had accomplished all their goals in Tennessee. They set their sights on AWA World tag team champions Baron Von Raschke

and Crusher, two aging veterans who seemed vulnerable. The Road Warriors struck first, however, and demolished Von Raschke and Crusher in Las Vegas on August 25. The Fabulous Ones, despite their tremendous talent, were no match for Animal and Hawk, who were at the peak of their careers.

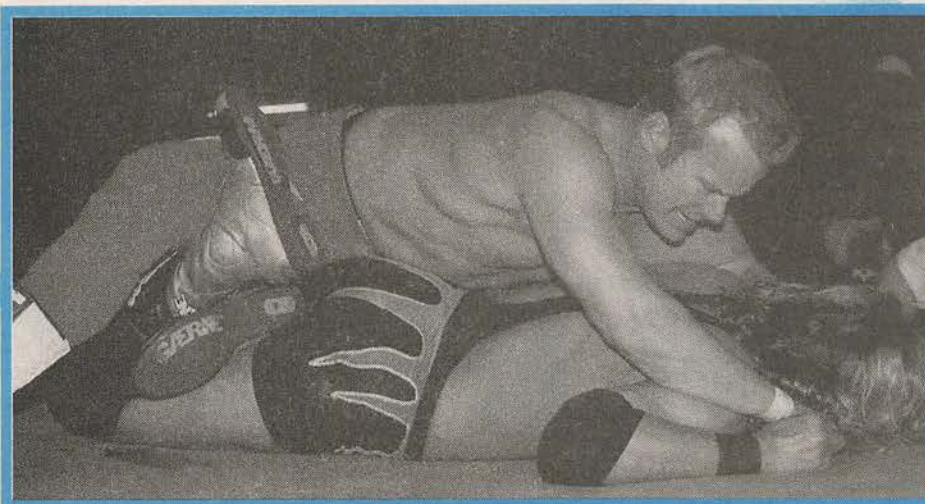
Failing to dethrone the Warriors, The Fabulous Ones drifted to Florida and lost their focus. Lane replaced Dennis Condrey in The Midnight Express and, along with Bobby Eaton, captured the NWA U.S. tag title three times. Keirn went on to win the Florida tag team title with Mike Graham three times, but he achieved only moderate success outside the Sunshine State.

Both men agree that their run as The Fabulous Ones was the most exhilarating of their careers.

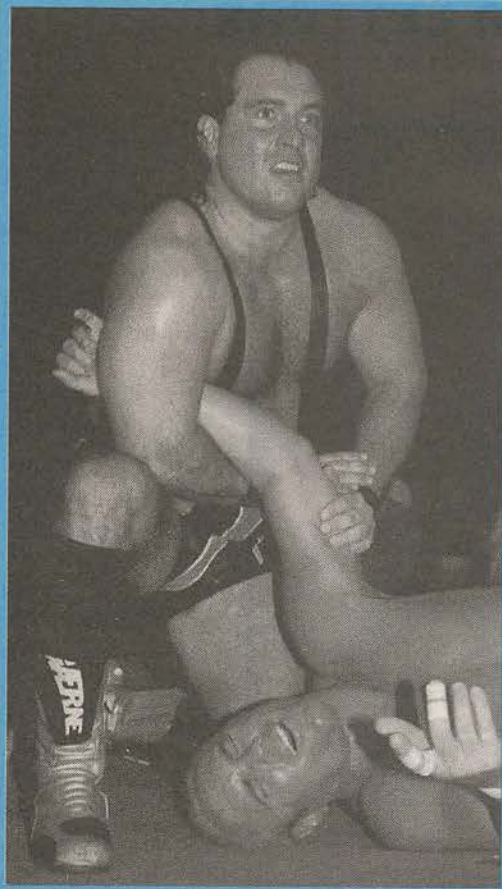
"That's why our reunion felt right," explained Lane. "Of course, the old Mid-Southern promotion is no more, but Music City has breathed new life into Tennessee wrestling. We helped make the sport hot in the '80s, so Steve and I thought we could do it again."

Keirn was more specific about their intentions. "We don't consider this a get-together for old times' sake," he said. "Stan and I wouldn't waste our time if we weren't serious about doing this comeback the right way. People want to get on our case because we've challenged a popular team like The Tennessee Volz. Well, if they're the best team in Music City, those are the guys we've gotta challenge. After that, who knows?"

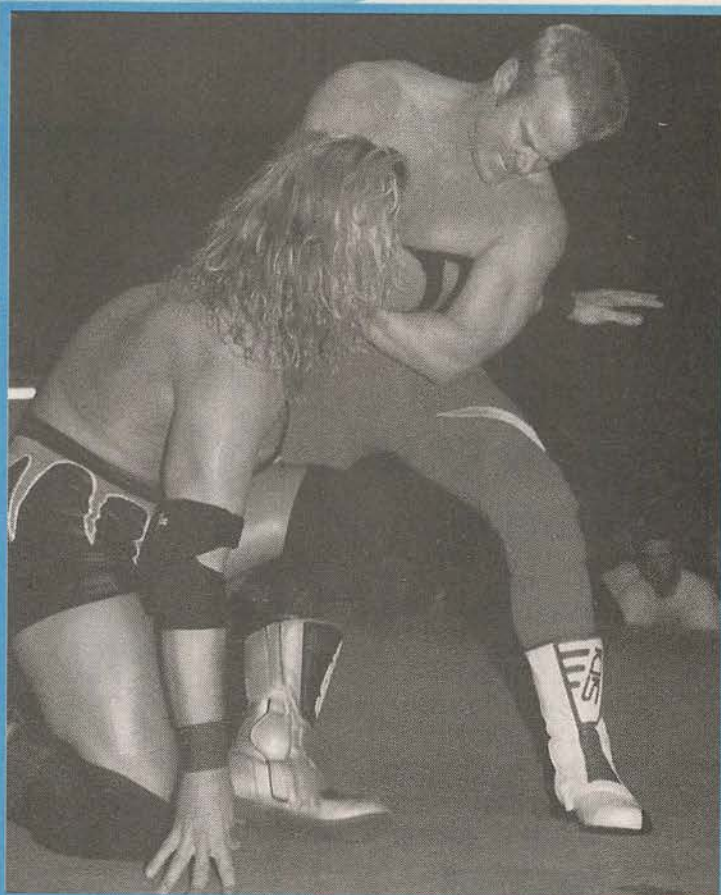
The North American tag team title is a top priority, as are matches against former AWA World tag team champs Jerry Lawler and Bill Dundee. Keirn has been an active competitor for 26 years and has recently competed throughout the Southeast independent circuit. Lane, who briefly served as a WWF broadcaster and has been retired for several years, has kept himself in phenomenal condition.



Lane goes to the mat against Dunn, who must feel as if he's caught in some kind of odd time warp! That's right—Lane and Keirn are still very dangerous.



Riggins' armbar on Keirn didn't do much damage, as the Fabulous One showed he still has an uncanny ability to absorb punishment.



When it comes to scientific wrestling, Lane demonstrates that he's still as fabulous as ever! Well, at least *almost* as fabulous. He and Keirn plan on sticking around for a while.

Do the Fabs still have the magic? On March 13, Keirn and Lane proved they did.

The Fabs' bout with The Tennessee Volz was a heated encounter, which included brawling and scientific wrestling. It was ruled a no-contest when several Music City malcontents attacked both teams. Keirn, Lane, Dunn, and Riggins—all working together—finally cleared the ring.

"The Fabulous Ones still have it," Dunn admitted afterward. "I've got the lumps on my noggin to prove it. But Reno and me still want a piece of 'em. We want another match with those so-called legends—free of interference."

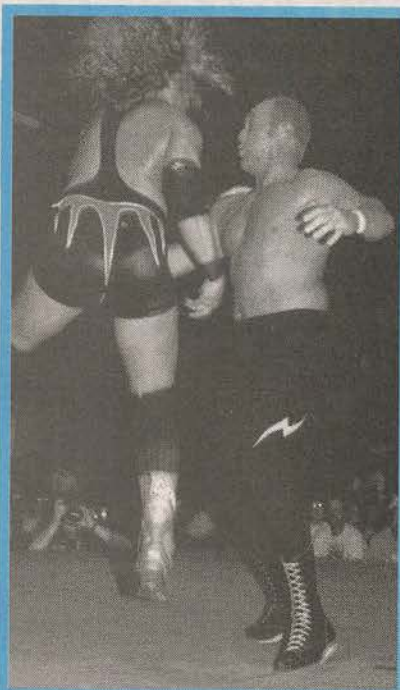
"Once we beat 'em, I hope they help us take care of some Tennessee slime," added Riggins. "Who knows? They might talk us into wearin' those little bow ties."

The Fabulous Ones have

signed contracts for further dates in Music City and in Memphis-based Power Pro Wrestling, where they've been feuding with Lawler and Dundee, and it looks like they'll be around for a while. Some think their greatest success is yet to come.

"There's no doubt about it," said Behrens. "The Fabulous Ones are one of the 10 greatest teams ever. I don't think anyone will dispute that. The Road Warriors are still going strong today, but in my opinion, Keirn and Lane are in much better shape. This comeback will do even more to boost their standing in tag team history."

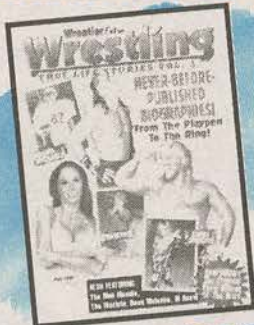
As great as The Fabulous Ones were, there must be some regret over their premature split so many years ago. Perhaps Keirn and Lane can make up for lost time with one more fabulous run. □



Keirn still mixes effective brawling with his solid scientific wrestling, as Dunn learns to his dismay.

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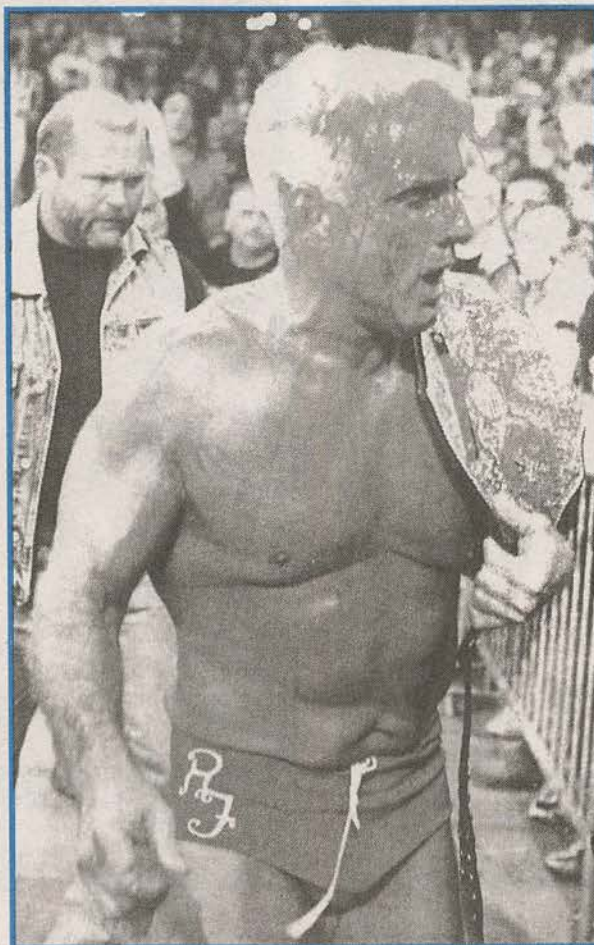
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)



The "Nature Boy" was battered and bloody by the end of Uncensored, but he accomplished at least three of the feats outlined in our June 1999 issue. Reader Alice Markbride doesn't know if that's a good or a bad thing.

weapons matches are as old as Rome!

SUZANNE H. GRIMARD
Greenfield, MA

MIXED EMOTIONS

I found your article on Ric Flair in the June 1999 ("Ric Flair: The 10 Feats He Must Accomplish Before He's Through!") very interesting. Flair has accomplished several of them already, although given his latest turn, I wish he hadn't, and I'm sure the writers at THE WRESTLER wish he hadn't as well.

Here is what I think:

1. Squash Hogan. Flair did that, but he went about it the wrong

way, and now the fans are getting behind Hogan.

2. Get David's career going. Why, so he could turn against Ric and embarrass him in front of the world?

3. Establish the Horsemen for the long haul. Flair has been looking out for himself while Arn looks after Benoit and Malenko. And what ever happened to Steve McMichael?

4. Be appointed WCW president on a full-time basis. Boy, are we paying for this one. You wanted it, now you got it.

5. Win one more world title. The 14th wasn't a very impressive reign.

6. Appear on the cover of GQ. Who cares?

7. Make peace with Randy Savage. See number two.

8. One last match against Rick Steamboat. Or anyone else besides Hogan or Sting.

9. Win his last match at Starrcade. See number six.

10. Win the Wrestler of the Millennium award. Yeah, right!

As you can see from my responses, I have mixed feelings about the "Nature Boy," but the article was good.

ALICE MARKBRIDE
Manderville, TX

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)

Randy Klemme has defeated "**Dangerous Bull**" **Don Basher** for the Wild Championship Wrestling Outlaws heavyweight belt ...

Frenchy Riviera has beaten his former tag team partner **Silky Boom Boom** for the NWA Georgia heavyweight championship ... Woman wrestler **Pagan** had a great night at the May 1 AIWF show in Wallace, North Carolina, recently. Not only did she beat a man who goes by the name of **The Tough Customer** in a mixed gender match, but she also won a thumbtack battle royal. On that same card, AIWF heavyweight champ **Rick Deeze**, unsatisfied by his victory over **Robbie Evil**, sprayed lighter fluid on Evil and set him on fire! Evil was treated for burns on his face, hands, chest, and torso.

It saddens me to have to report that former Florida heavyweight champion **Jos LeDuc** died on May 4 in Fayetteville, Georgia, due to complications from a lung infection. He was 55.

LeDuc struggled with diabetes for the past three years and was rendered so weak by the condition that six months ago, he fell on a sidewalk and broke a rib, which then punctured his lung. Infection found its way into Jos' lung and eventually claimed his life.

"He was in very poor health for the last six months," Jos' brother **Paul**, who, held the NWA tag team title with him in 1972, told me. "He had to go to the hospital twice a week to get fluid drained from his lungs."

During his career, LeDuc had memorable feuds with **Bruiser Brody**, **Barry Windham**, and **Jerry Lawler**, among others. He was inducted into the Memphis Hall of Fame in 1995 as a

USWA legend.

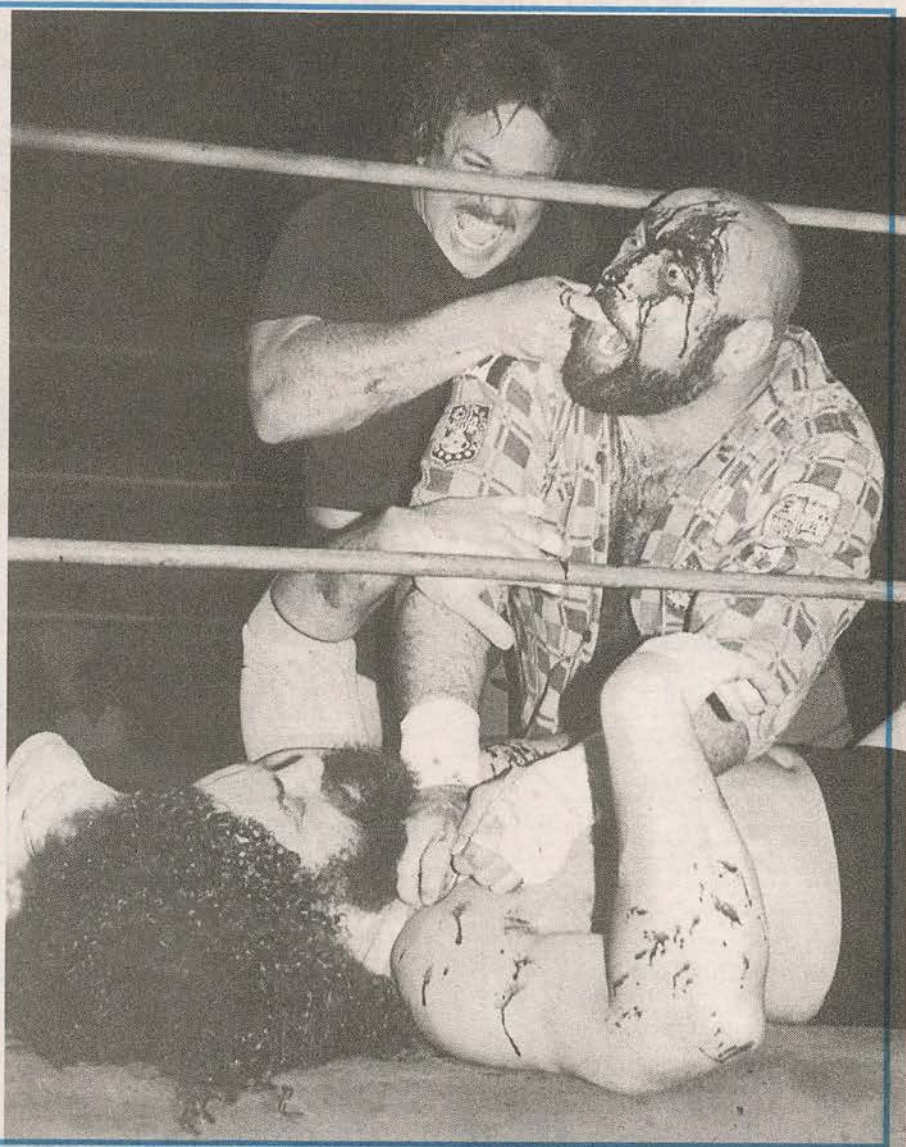
"Winning those NWA tag team belts was the highlight of his career," said Paul. "Mine, too."

On a final note, it appears that **Col. DeBeers'** extreme social views haven't been tempered by the passage of time, or by the dawning of a new politically correct era. DeBeers, who currently competes for the Vancouver-based NWA/ECCW promotion, has issued an open challenge to

all wrestlers—but especially East Indian wrestlers. DeBeers has his sights set on two wrestlers—**Akim** and **Gama Singh**—in particular.

"I've proven my superiority in South Africa and America," DeBeers boasted. "Now it is time for me to prove myself to these miserable Canadians. I shall begin by cleansing Canada of these lowlife Indians."

That's what's happening. See ya at the matches! □



Bruiser Brody and referee Scott Casey were not enough to stop a bloody Jos LeDuc here, but a lung infection put LeDuc down and out on May 4. He died in Fayetteville, Georgia, at age 55.

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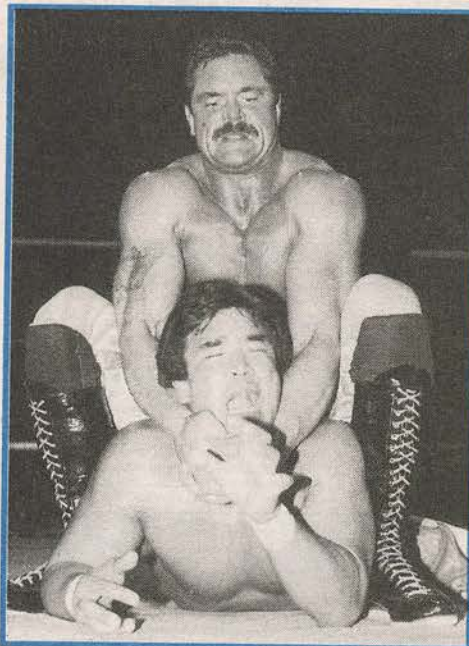
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NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)



Unfortunately for Rude fans, they didn't get to see him do what he did best, which is wrestle (here against Rick Steamboat), after 1994, when a back injury ended his career.

When a wrestler dies, we tend to overstate the significance of that

person's career. Rick Rude's track record does not need any embellishment.

He was a rulebreaker who was not ashamed of being a rulebreaker. He never played to the crowds. As he surveyed arenas after telling the people operating the public address system to "cut the music," he would look at the masses with scorn. He'd call them out-of-shape sweatshogs. Boos would rain down on "The Ravishing One," and he wouldn't have had it any other way.

Nowadays, most rulebreakers come off as being fearless and cool. That way, they can ensure that fans will cheer them in spite of their tactics. Rick Rude could not and would not embrace that philosophy. The more boos he heard, the better he felt. He fed off them and was inspired to win sin-

gles and tag team titles.

He scratched and clawed his way from WWF Intercontinental and WCW U.S. title wins to world title opportunities. He proved that he had a lot more to offer in the ring than gyrations and pelvic thrusts.

Before he died, I heard rumors that Rude was considering a comeback as a wrestler. Can you imagine Rude against Bill Goldberg or Steve Austin? Either match could have been great.

Rude spent his entire career shocking the wrestling world in his own way. In death, he gave us the biggest shock of all—a shock that both numbed and saddened us. In honor of Rick Rude, allow me to paraphrase his most famous line:

What I'd like to have right now is for all you WRESTLER readers out there to keep the noise down and observe a moment of silence for the memory of "Ravishing" Rick Rude.

Hit the music. □

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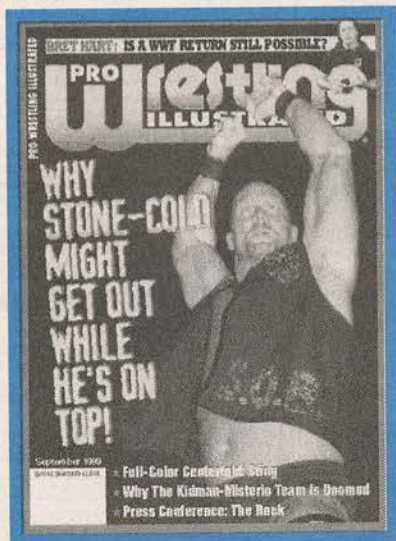
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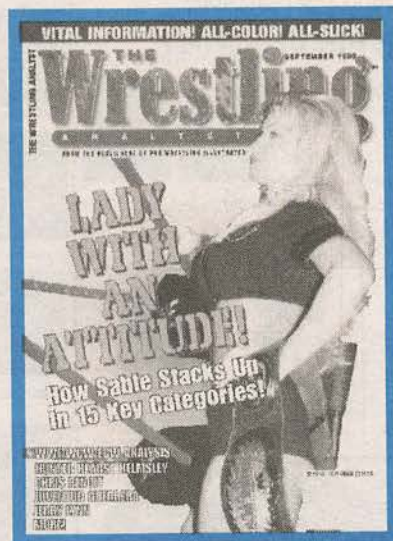
STEVE AUSTIN retires! No, we haven't seen that headline yet, but we could see it *very* soon. He's the hottest wrestler in the world, he has the WWF title back, and all sorts of TV shows want him. Could he really be thinking of getting out while he's on top? ... So **BRET HART** has quit WCW.

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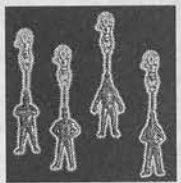
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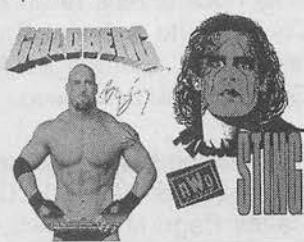
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CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

(Continued from page 14)

top of Rogers. Youth managed to get back to his feet first and climb back into the ring. This time Youth distracted the official while Adams used his towel to choke Rogers against the security railing.

Rogers proved his mettle, though, when he climbed back into the ring and fought back with everything he had. He sent Youth reeling to the canvas with a running kneelift and used his strength advantage to bounce Youth all over the ring—almost like a tennis ball. Just when it looked like Rogers was on his way to victory, Reckless raked his eyes and nailed him with a series of kicks.

Youth then climbed to the top rope to execute a moonsault, but Rogers moved and Youth landed with a thud in the middle of the ring. Rogers then used his Tomikaze to finish Youth as the referee counted to three.

After the match, Adams attempted to sneak up on Rogers from behind, but Tommy nailed him with a hard right hand—the impact of which sent Adams crashing to the mat as the fans cheered.

In other bouts: NEW light heavyweight champion "Surfer" Ray Odyssey pinned Adolfo of La Raza ... Tiny the Terrible beat Half Nelson ... "Psycho" Sid Vicious & Youngblood beat "Roughhouse" Ralph Mosca & John Diamond when Sid pinned Diamond ... Teddy "The Tank" Reade defeated Julio of La Raza ... Juan Xavier wrestled Johnny Handsome (managed by Paul Adams) to a time-limit draw ... Jake Roberts beat Rican Havoc ... Tony DeVito & Primo Carnera III defeated J.L. Storm & Jeff Jacobs ... George Steele beat Sledge.

Philadelphia, PA (Correspondent—Frank Vitucci): "Diamond" Dallas Page knew it wouldn't be easy for him to escape his three-way match with Ric Flair and Sting at the First Union Spectrum with the WCW

World title belt remaining in his possession. After all, the rules state that he would lose the belt even if Sting pinned Flair, or vice versa.

But he soon found out that his task was going to be even tougher than he expected, because after the bell rang, Sting and Flair began to double-team him. As soon as Page went down to the mat, however, Sting attacked and gorilla press-slammed Flair. Sting then turned his attention back to Page by slamming him and sending him out of the ring.

Back in the ring, Sting and Flair traded punches, with Sting gaining an advantage right away. Within a few seconds, Sting backed Flair into a corner and repeatedly pounded him as the fans counted the blows. When Sting let him go, Flair took a few wobbly steps out of the corner before collapsing.

Sensing victory was imminent, Sting then locked on his scorpion deathlock, but before Flair could submit, Page attacked Sting and power-bombed him. Sting rallied with a reverse atomic drop before locking on a sleeperhold. With Page down, Sting went to the top rope to execute a beautiful splash.

While Sting went to pin DDP, though, Flair climbed to the top turnbuckle and waited for a chance to interfere. Sting noticed this and tossed Flair from his perch. But Flair recovered and joined Page in double-teaming Sting. With Sting down, Page then attempted a sunset flip on Flair, but Flair blocked it. As Page tried to pull Flair down into a pinning position, he instead pulled Flair's tights down. Partially exposed, Flair punched his way out of the pin attempt.

As Page got up from the mat,



"Diamond" Dallas Page delivers a elbowsmash to the back of Sting's head during a three-way match for the WCW World title in Philadelphia. Page eventually used a Diamond cutter on Sting to retain the title.

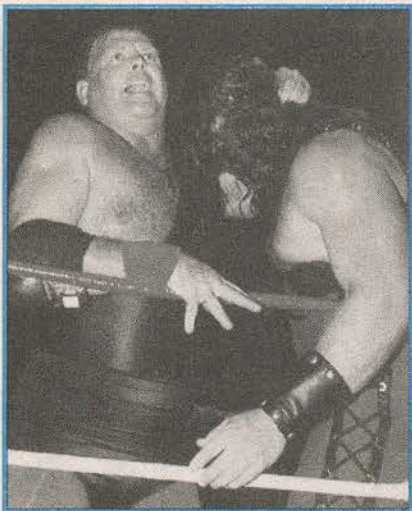
Sting grabbed him and tried to whip him into the ropes, but Page reversed the Irish whip attempt, and Sting crashed into Flair as he rebounded from the ropes. Page then nailed Sting with a quick Diamond cutter and got the pin.

In other bouts: Chavo Guerrero Jr. beat Blitzkrieg ... Dave "Fit" Finlay beat Prince Laukea ... Bam Bam Bigelow beat Perry Saturn ... Konnan beat Horace Hogan ... Raven defeated Hak ... WCW cruiserweight champion Rey Misterio Jr. beat Juventud Guerrera ... Rick Steiner beat Meng ... Bill Goldberg defeated Curt Hennig. □

Send your reports to:
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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)



Jerry Lawler wrestled Kane several times last summer, but not in a WWF ring. They traveled to Power Pro to do battle. Most of today's WWF stars are too scared to wrestle him, says Lawler.

else is bogus. And I believe that if I had accepted the belt, neither Paul Heyman, the fans, nor the boys in the locker room would have looked at me as a legitimate champ. Some things should be done the right way, and winning a championship belt is one of them."

...

Q: "My question is for Jerry Lawler: 'King,' I think you are the best color commentator in the world, but how come we never see you wrestle in the WWF anymore?"—Sean Dugan, Fort Wayne, IN

A: "Apparently," Lawler said, "nobody wants to wrestle me. I've been begging Mr. McMahon for months to sign me to

a match with somebody, but nobody will sign the dotted line. But don't fear, sooner or later, one of these young cusses up here will try to make a name for himself by knocking off 'The King.' That's why I stay in such great shape by beating up on all the young stars down in Power Pro Wrestling. This way, when Mr. McMahon calls me into service, I'll be ready to go at a moment's notice. In the meantime, keep tuning in to *Raw* so you can hear my brilliant commentary." □

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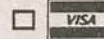
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What's it like being married to a wrestling star? In this exclusive interview, Chief Jay Strongbow's pretty wife, Mary, tells what it's like...and why she wants the Chief to quit wrestling!

Exclusive Interview!

WHY CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW'S WIFE WANTS HIM TO QUIT WRESTLING!



Mary repairs one of the Chief's headdresses (above). She has to hold back her feelings when he is injured (above, right). Mary would prefer he stay on the farm with their son and their many friends (right).



WRESTLER CLASSIC!

Collette Foley pleaded with her husband, Mick (Mankind), to quit wrestling in our Holiday 1998 issue. Is her story similar to that of Chief Jay Strongbow? Read this "Wrestler Classic" from September 1974 to find out!



DURING AN INTERVIEW with Chief Jay Strongbow, a startling confession was revealed.

"My wife wants me to quit," the most popular Indian wrestler in the world admitted.

As you know, our hard hitting magazines pride themselves in getting to the heart of any story to bring you the full inside report.

This story is no different. The next morning, after the interview, we telephoned Strongbow's wife, Mary. She was very receptive and confirmed the Chief's story.

"There's more than one reason I want him to quit," she stated. "The major one being injuries. Another thing is the number of miles he travels a year."

Mary, eager to tell her side of the story, continued. She expressed fear that not only might he be hurt in a match, but also in transit—in an airplane or in a car," she said in a worried tone of voice.

Mary loves her husband very much and admits she gets very little time to spend with him.

"Sometimes I see him only once

a month," she stressed. "That's it. He goes all over the country. As far east as Cincinnati, Ohio and Detroit. Also to Canada, on occasion, as well as other places far away from home.

Does Mrs. Strongbow want her husband to get a title shot at World Wide Wrestling Federation champion Bruno Sammartino?

"No!" she exclaimed coldly. "Don't get me wrong. You see, I'm afraid he'll win. Like I said before, I don't see him more than once a month sometimes. I know what Bruno's schedule is like. I know how much he travels. He goes all over the world. I think Jay's busy enough now. I don't need that. I definitely do not want him to go after the title.

Mary's influence could have something to do with Strongbow's not pressing the title situation more often.

"I would like to believe I have some influence with him as far as that goes," Mary went on. "And yes. I do feel it holds him back a bit from pressing for a title shot.

"I don't think my attitude toward the title hurts him because I think he understands my reasoning. it isn't a selfish thing," she said assuringly. "If I was so eager for us to get ahead, I'd push and push for a title shot for him instead of trying to hold him back.

"I'm not really holding him back," she added. "Maybe I shouldn't say that. I'm just trying to make him take it easy. He's always on the go. It would satisfy me if he wrestled two times a week or so rather than almost all week."

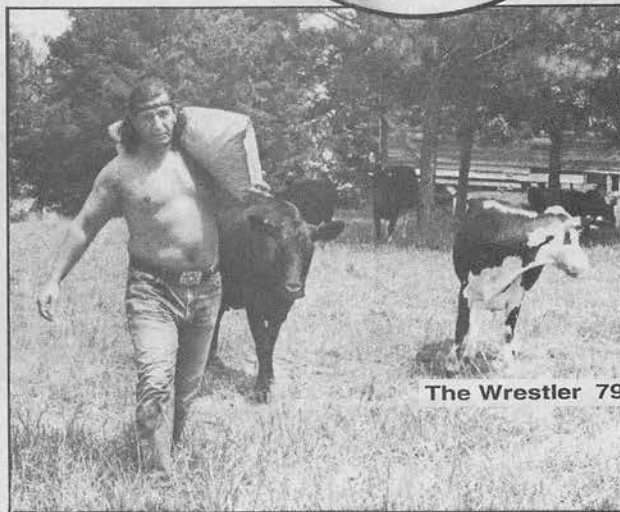
Since her attitude is so strong concerning Jay's career, would Mary want her son to pursue wrestling?

"I hope I'm the kind of mother who would want him to pursue whatever course he thought suited for himself. He should make his own mind up about that. I won't intentionally encourage him to go into wrestling, but on the other hand I wouldn't purposely discourage him."

Everyone loves to see the Chief wrestle, his wife especially so, even

PHOTOS BY BOB VERLIN

Mary and Jay have much fun on the farm (left). But Jay (right) isn't home too often, although he loves to work on the farm (below).



though she wants him to quit.

"I get chills whenever I see him wrestle," she said in a friendly, slight southern drawl. Then her attitude changed as she said, "Sometimes I get heart failure."

The heart failure comes when she sees him injured at the arena or while watching his matches on television. What happens when the Chief is sneak attacked and bloodied at the hands of someone like Lou Albano or Fred Blassie?

"I don't mind telling you I'd like to get a baseball bat and take a few shots at Albano," she said. "I experience fury when I see something like that. I'd like to strangle Albano. I don't think it would bother me at all to rip his tongue out. I'd like to make him gasp for breath!"

"I talk to Jay once or twice a day," she continued. "If he's had an injury I don't know about, he prepares me by telling me he's got a new set of stitches or something to that effect."

If her husband took her advice and quit, what would he do?

"He's got a cattle farm," she explained. "He has a great love and

interest in that. He's content to build fences and ride horses. He's worked so hard for so long it's time he enjoyed what he's worked for. He should enjoy what leisure time he can get."

Does she get jealous of his admirers?

"That doesn't bother me one bit," she stressed. "To start with, if you're a jealous type of person, don't marry a wrestler. You'd commit murder or suicide with a jealous attitude. You just couldn't take it. I'm glad people love him."

"If a woman wants to marry a wrestler she should also like traveling. You see, this career Jay has chosen has given me an opportunity to see places and things that I wouldn't have been able to see if he was something like a supermarket manager. Put it this way. If you love him, it doesn't make any difference what he does. If he's a shoe salesman and you're in love with him you marry him. But before you marry a wrestler you must know beforehand that there are weeks and weeks he'll be away from home. You just have to accept it."

One of her big fears came out next.

"I always fear he'll be killed in the ring," she admitted. "I don't believe there is a wrestler's wife who doesn't have that fear. It's something that you try not to dwell on. Everytime that thought enters your mind you try to discard it as soon as possible. But it's a steady fear."

"I don't show my husband this fear," she adds. "I think he has enough worries with people like Albano, Blassie and the Grand Wizard. He doesn't need my thoughts to worry about, too. I don't burden him with that."

With that, we wrapped up our conversation. As far as we know the Chief does not plan to quit in the immediate future. As for a title shot, he still remains on top of the W.W.W.F.'s top contender list.

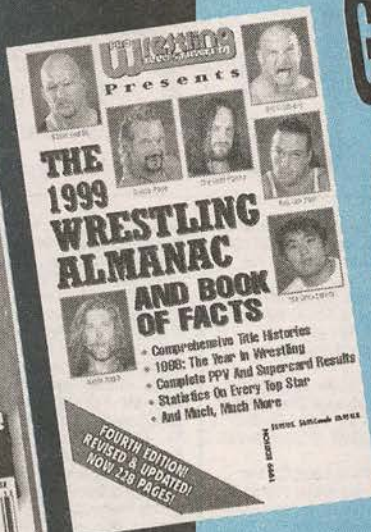
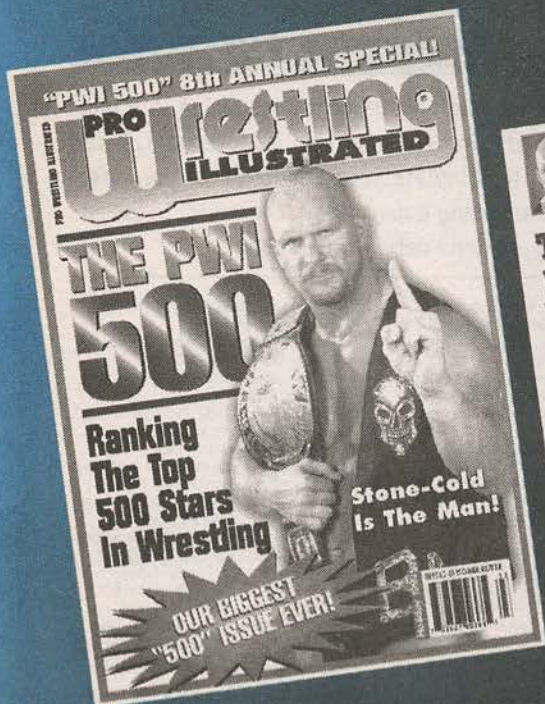
But now the question that comes into play is, when that time comes, what will the Chief really want? A happy home or a life defending a title and traveling all over the world without his loved ones?

Eventually he will have to make a decision. □



The Chief enjoys the company of his son and a couple of the boy's friends (left). An old photo shows the threesome when they first bought the ranch. It's obvious the fans love the Chief (right). "I'm happy about that," Mary says.





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Oct. 1991 (Special Issue): 25 Years—The Silver Anniversary Celebration Of Wrestling's Most Respected Magazine. Includes: Year-By-Year, greatest photos, 25 greatest wrestlers, Q & A Bruno Sammartino.

Nov. 1991: Lex Luger Wins The Title—But Loses His Fans. Also: Rick Steamboat, Roddy Piper, Global, Diamond Studd, Lawler-Embry.

Dec. 1991: Roddy Piper's Exclusive Analysis: Flair vs. Hogan—Who Will Win The Match Of The Century? Also: Sting, 25 greatest teams, Beverly, Cactus Jack.

Jan. 1992: The LOD's Championship Catastrophe: Overpowered By The Natural Disasters. Also: Johnny B. Badd, Mr. Hughes, Jake Roberts, Ronnie Gossett.

Feb. 1992: Shocking WWF Report: McMahon Offers Bounty On Flair—Will Vince Pay The Piper? Also: Ron Simmons, Tito Santana, Bob Backlund, R. Steiner-Abdullah.

March 1992: After Survivor Series & Tuesday In Texas: Has The WWF Title Suffered Irreparable Damage? Also: Brian Pillman, Anderson & Bruiser, Rude-Sting, Mountie-Hart, Jeff Jarrett.

April 1992: After A Year Of Tragedy & Turmoil: The Magic Is Back In WCW! Also: Chris Candido, Paul Orndorff, Lady X, Paul Bearer, Hennig & Flair, Michaels & Jannetty.

Dec. 1992: He's Baaaaack! Jake Roberts Slithers Into WCW. Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Ron Simmons, Hulk Hogan, Michaels-Martel, Gilberts-Rock 'n' Rolls.

May 1992: He Rumbled Past 29 Men ... Ric Flair's Hour Of Power: Can One Man Stop Him At WrestleMania VIII? Also: Anderson & Eaton, Roddy Piper, Dusty Rhodes, USWA, Don Owen.

June 1992: In Ric Flair's High-Stakes Championship Game, Hulk Hogan & Sid Justice Are Mere Pawns. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Ultimate Warrior, Vinnie Vegas, WCW titles, Koko B. Ware.

July 1992: "Number Two Just Won't Do": For Rick Rude, The U.S. Belt Means Failure: Also: Madusa, Gorilla Monsoon, LOD, Nurse Vanessa, Greg Valentine, Sabu.

Aug. 1992: The Ultimate Warrior: WrestleMania's Accidental Hero. Also:

Bunkhouse matches, Undertaker-Roberts, Sting, JYD, Rob Van Dam.

Sept. 1992: Hey, Legion Of Doom—Go For The Title Or Go Away! Also: Repo-Crush, Mondo Kleen, Freebirds-Valentine & Taylor, Dangerous Alliance, Moondogs.

Oct. 1992: British Bulldog & Ultimate Warrior: Why They'll Be Crowned At SummerSlam. Also: Scotty Flamingo, Brian Lee, Martel-Tatanka, Steve Austin, Sting.

Nov. 1992: WWF Beware! It's The Perfect Time For A Curt Hennig Comeback! Also: Crush, Butch Reed, Sting, Buddy Rogers, Dan Spivey.

Jan. 1993: Sting Turns Sadistic: "Hurting Jake Makes Me Happy!" Also: Anderson & Eaton, Bushwhackers-Moondogs, Ramon-Savage, Natural Disasters, Masa Chono.

Feb. 1993: WWF Champion Bret Hart: His Five Most Dangerous Challenges. Also: Sgt. Slaughter, Steve Austin, Rick Steiner, Bob Backlund, Terry Taylor.

April 1993: What's In? What's Out? Also: Razor Ramon, Rick Steamboat, Patriot, Tatanka, Brian Christopher.

May 1993: Sumo Sadism: Will Yokozuna Make His Biggest Splash At WrestleMania? Also: Jim Cornette, Christopher-Jarrett, Benoit-Scorpio, Windham & Rhodes, Hennig-Luger.

Nov. 1993: Bret Hart vs. Lex Luger: It's Not Over Yet! Also: Rude-Dustin, Hulk Hogan, Marty Jannetty, Heavenly Bodies, Tatanka, Sherri Martel.

Jan. 1994: Roasted, Broiled, Fried, Baked ... Any Way You Cook It, Hogan's A Chicken! Also: Rude-Flair, Bagwell & Scorpio, Jim Cornette, Jerry Lawler, Hansen & T. Funk-Abdullah & Sullivan.

May 1994: Aftershocks! How The Royal Rumble Shook Up WrestleMania. Also: Hulk Hogan, Boss, Douglas-Sherri, Patriot, improve WCW.

July 1994: Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan: We Preview The Inevitable Battle. Also: Dreamer-Snuka, Jim Crockett's WWN, Ted DiBiase, Shane Douglas, Terra Ryzing.

Aug. 1994: Bret's Nightmare Team Becomes A Reality: Owen Hart & Yokozuna. Also: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Flair-Badd, Nasty Boys, Luna Vachon.

Sept. 1994 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report! Also: Big Van Vader, Parker-Hollywood Blonds, Sting-Rude, WWF legal problems, Prince Khari, Bunkhouse-Rhodes, Public Enemy.

Nov. 1994: Hulk Hogan's New Commandments: Say Prayers, Take Vitamins ... And Kick Butt! Also: Owen-Bret, Lord Steven Regal, Johnny B. Badd, Jerry Lawler, Mikey Whipwreck.

Dec. 1994: Hulkster Under Siege! Can Hogan Hold Off WCW's Best? Also: Lex Luger, Sid Vicious, Steve Austin, Adam Bomb, Dusty Rhodes.

Jan. 1995: Our Holiday Wish List For 1995. Also: Johnny B. Badd, DiBiase-Tatanka, Bob Backlund, PG-13, Hacksaw Duggan.

March 1995 (Special Issue): 1994—The Year In Pictures. Also: Sullivan-Hogan-Sullivan, WWF '95-WWF '85, Ric Flair, MOM, 911.

April 1995: Imagine Wrestling Today If ... Also: Gunn & Smothers, Harlem Heat, Money Inc., Lawler-Cornette.

July 1995: Hulk Hogan's Contract With America: Also: Marty Jannetty, Brian Pillman, Lawrence Taylor, Bill Dundee.

Oct. 1995: President Backlund?! Also: Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas, Gordon Solie.

Nov. 1995: "Take That—And Shut Up!" If Savage Can't Silence Flair, He's Through! Also: Mabel, Jarrett-Ramon, Renegade, WWF legends roundtable.

Dec. 1995 (Special Issue): 20Shawn Michaels: Too Good To Be Second Best! Also: Wrestling rulebook, Vega-Ramon, Marna Cornette, Kamala-Duggan, Big Van Vader.

Winter 1995: Exclusive Preview: Sting vs. Hogan: This Time It's For Real! Also: Steiners, Yankem-Undertaker, Bodies-Cornette, Arn Anderson.

March 1996 (Special Issue): 1995—The Year In Pictures. Also: Hogan-Hart, Big Van Vader, Sabu, Brian Pillman.

April 1996: Luger, Sting, Hogan, Savage: Can't We All Be Friends? Also: DiBiase & Kid, Diesel-McMahon, Dallas Page, Jeff Jarrett.

May 1996: WWF In-Vader! Can Bret, Shawn, & Razor Play The Pain Game? Also: Public Enemy, Steve Austin, wrestling oddities, Kensuke Sasaki, Ric Flair.

June 1996 (Special Issue): Fear Of Height! How The Giant Is Paralyzing Wrestling. Also: Shock 'n' Wrestling, Razor Ramon, Brian Pillman, Konnan.

Aug. 1996: Shawn Michaels: Finally—He Has The Title ... Now Here's What He's Gotta Do With It! Also: Public Enemy-Nastys, Bret Hart, Booty Man-Sullivan, Mabel.

Sept. 1996 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: Savio Vega, Sabu-Scorpio, Chris Benoit, Goldust, Olympians, Giant.

Oct. 1996: Muscling Back To The Top: The Warrior Is Ready To Rule Again. Also: Warriors & Sasaki-Steiners & Norton, Razor & Diesel, Mabel & Mo, Blue Meanie.

Nov. 1996: Brian Pillman: Next WWF Champ! Also: Giant-Sting, Ray Stevens, Dick Murdoch, Cloudy, John Tenta, WCW shuffle.

Dec. 1996 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Ahmed Johnson, Ric Flair, Mero & Sable, Goldust, Sandman.

Holiday 1996: WCW Shocker: Randy Savage Is Set To Join Hulk Hogan's NWO! Also: Steve Austin, Michaels-Goldust, Arn Anderson, Van Dam-Sabu, Steve Williams.

Jan. 1997: It Could Happen! Hogan's Next Move ... Buy WCW! Also: Undertaker, New Jack, Owen-Bulldog, Ted DiBiase.

Feb. 1997: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1997 Has In Store For Them! Also: Michaels-Hart, Pit Bull I, Rey Mysterio Jr., Kevin Nash.

May 1997: Hogan's Headache: The Pain Is Piper! And The Remedy Is Revenge! Also: Michaels-Hart, Guerreros, J.C. Ice, gang violence, Marc Mero.

July 1997: Infighting, Politics, Egos: Is The NWO Losing Its Edge? Also: WWF-ECW, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney, Jerry Lawler.

Sept. 1997 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report: Plus: NWO, Shawn-Bret, football

players, Terry & Dory Funk, Luna.

Oct. 1997: Bret Hart & Shawn Michaels: How Low Will They Go? Also: Paul E. Dangerously, DDP & Kimberly, Rhodes family, Keiji Muto.

Nov. 1997: 10-Year Grudge! Lex Luger's Career Ruined By J.J. Dillon? Also: Shawn-Bret, Jeff Jarrett, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn.

Dec. 1997 (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: Guerreros, Taz, Syxx, Paul Bearer, Brian Christopher.

Hol. 1997: First Owen ... Then Taker ... Then Hogan: Who's Gonna Go Next? Also: Steve Austin, Bret Hart, Lex Luger, Ric Flair, Dean Malenko.

April 1998: "We've Won!" Maybe ... But Can The NWO Handle Its Own Success? Also: Ken Shamrock, Steiners-Warriors, Douglas & Francine, Rocky Maivia.

May 1998: Mike Tyson: Stepping Into Wrestling Hell! Also: Bischoff-Zbyszko, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Meng & Barbarian, ECW, "Hollywood" Hogan.

June 1998 (Special Issue): "Hollywood" Hogan: 10 More Dirt Deeds ... And He's Outta Here! Also: Randy Savage, DeGeneration X, Jim Cornette, Randy Savage, then and now.

July 1998: Death Wish! Costing Hogan The Title Isn't Enough For The Macho Man. Also: Headbangers, Ric Flair, Chris Chetti.

Aug. 1998: The Wrestling War, Vince! It's Time To Fire Austin. Also: Luna-Sable, Randy Savage, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney.

Sept. 1998: (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report. Also: Nash-Hogan, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg, Antonio Inoki.

Oct. 1998: The Mother Of All Pay-Per-Views! A WWF-WCW Supercard Is No Longer Just Talk! Also: Sable, Undertaker, Randy Savage, Sabu & Van Dam.

Nov. 1998: Demons Be Damned! Sting Makes The Giant See Red! Also: McMahon-Dude, Jarrett-Blackman, Melanie Pillman, Rey Mysterio Jr.

Dec. 1998: (Special Issue): WWF vs. WCW: Top 10 Faceoff! Also: ECW midyear report, Ric Flair, Kane.

Hol. 1998: "Quit, Mick!" A Desperate Plea From A Distracted Wife. Also: Chris Jericho, Jason Sensation, wrestlers vs. celebrities, hardcore war.

Jan. 1999: Stone-Cold's Personal Survivor Series. Also: Rock-HHH, NWA, Bret Hart, Howard Finkel, three-way title matches.

Feb. 1999: Hot Rocks! The Anger That Drives Shamrock & The Rock. Also: McMahon-Austin, Spike Dudley, Eric Bischoff, Perry Saturn.

March 1999 (Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Pictures. Also: Hall & Nash, Goldust, Mr. Ooh La La, The Undertaker.

April 1999: Hogan's Retirement: White House Or White Lie? Also: DDP-Hart, Taz-Douglas, Steve Austin, Mankind.

May 1999: Team Coverage: The NWO Reunion! Also: Kane-McMahon, Dallas Page, Funk-Abdullah, WWF sideshow.

June 1999 (Special Issue): Ric Flair: The 10 Feats He Must Accomplish Before He's Through. Also: Rocky Maivia, Juventud Guerrera, Billy Gunn, body parts quiz section.

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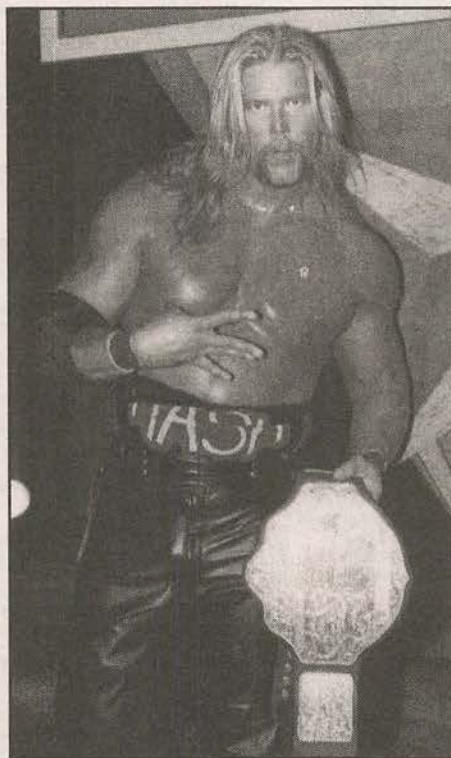
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Wrestler

TOP 10

- 1 **STEVE AUSTIN**
252, Victoria, TX
(1) WWF World champion
- 2 **KEVIN NASH**
356, Detroit, MI
(-) WCW World champion
- 3 **THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
(9) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 4 **MITSU HARU MISAWA**
228, Ashikaga, Japan
(-) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
- 5 **DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
260, Tampa, FL
(2) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
- 6 **THE ROCK**
272, Miami, FL
(3) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 7 **SCOTT STEINER**
251, Detroit, MI
(6) WCW U.S. champion
- 8 **STING**
260, Venice Beach, CA
(7) No. 3 contender: WCW World title
- 9 **TAZ**
248, Red Hook, NY
(8) ECW heavyweight champion
- 10 **THE GODFATHER**
340, Las Vegas, NV
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion



Kevin Nash

TAG TEAMS

- 1 **PERRY SATURN & RAVEN**
Combined weight: 469 pounds
(5) WCW World tag team champions
- 2 **KANE & X-PAC**
Combined weight: 557 pounds
(1) WWF World tag team champions
- 3 **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
Combined weight: 585 pounds
(9) ECW tag team champions
- 4 **SHIRO KOSHINAKA & KENSUKE SASAKI**
Combined weight: 458 pounds
(-) IWGP International tag team champions
- 5 **BILLY KIDMAN & REY MISTERIO JR.**
Combined weight: 335 pounds
(2) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 6 **BRADSHAW & FAAROOQ**
Combined weight: 600 pounds
(10) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 7 **CHRIS BENOIT & DEAN MALENKO**
Combined weight: 434 pounds
(4) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 8 **AXL ROTTEN & MAHONEY**
Combined weight: 663 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title
- 9 **JUN AKIYAMA & KENTA KOBASHI**
Combined weight: 491 pounds
(8) All-Japan International tag team champions
- 10 **CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
Combined weight: 465 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title

WCW

World Champion:

KEVIN NASH
(-) 356, Detroit, MI

- 1—**SCOTT STEINER**
(1) 251, Detroit, MI
- 2—**DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
(C) 260, Tampa, FL
- 3—**STING**
(3) 260, Venice Beach, CA
- 4—**BILL GOLDBERG**
(5) 270, Tulsa, OK
- 5—**RICK STEINER**
(-) 248, Detroit, MI
- 6—**BOOKER T**
(7) 250, Harlem, NY
- 7—**RIC FLAIR**
(4) 243, Charlotte, NC
- 8—**BAM BAM BIGELOW**
(10) 368, Mt. Laurel, NJ
- 9—**REY MISTERIO JR.**
(6) 140, San Diego, CA
- 10—**KONNAN**
(8) 237, Mexico City, Mexico

WWF

World Champion:

STEVE AUSTIN
(C) 252, Victoria, TX

- 1—**THE GODFATHER**
(1) 340, Las Vegas, NV
- 2—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(4) 328, parts unknown
- 3—**THE ROCK**
(2) 272, Miami, FL
- 4—**PAUL WIGHT**
(5) 500, Atlanta, GA
- 5—**HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
(8) 279, Greenwich, CT
- 6—**KEN SHAMROCK**
(6) 235, San Bernardino, CA
- 7—**MANKIND**
(3) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM
- 8—**AL SNOW**
(-) 232, Lima, OH
- 9—**BILLY GUNN**
(-) 256, Austin, TX
- 10—**BIG BOSSMAN**
(-) 310, Cobb County, GA

ECW

ECW Champion:

TAZ
(C) 248, Red Hook, NY

- 1—**ROB VAN DAM**
(1) 237, Battle Creek, MI
- 2—**CHRIS CANDIDO**
(4) 226, Carteret, NJ
- 3—**JERRY LYNN**
(6) 214, Minneapolis, MN
- 4—**TOMMY DREAMER**
(7) 245, Yonkers, NY
- 5—**LANCE STORM**
(9) 234, Calgary, Alberta
- 6—**JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(3) 225, Waterbury, CT
- 7—**YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI**
(-) 224, Tokyo, Japan
- 8—**SUPER CRAZY**
(-) 172, Mexico City, Mexico
- 9—**NEW JACK**
(-) 225, Philadelphia, PA
- 10—**LITTLE GUIDO**
(-) 221, Philadelphia, PA

NWA

NWA Champion:

NAOYA OGAWA
(C) 286, Tokyo, Japan

- 1—**DAN SEVERN**
(2) 265, Detroit, MI
- 2—**COLORADO KID**
(4) 213, Denver, CO
- 3—**FRENCHY RIVIERA**
(-) 450, Paris, France
- 4—**GARY STEELE**
(8) 241, London, England
- 5—**DOUG GILBERT**
(1) 241, Lexington, TN
- 6—**STEVEN DUNN**
(10) 240, Dallas, TX
- 7—**KNUCKLES NELSON**
(-) 225, Reno, NV
- 8—**SAMU**
(7) 310, Allentown, PA
- 9—**MIKE ROSELLI**
(6) 265, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 10—**E.Z. RYDER**
(5) 230, Dallas, TX

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue. Note: In an effort to keep the ratings as up-to-date as possible, these pages are often the last to be sent to the printer. Thus, the ratings may reflect changes not reflected in the remainder of the issue.

For period ended May 14, 1999

ALL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Boyce LeGrande; 2—Maxx Justice; 3—Michael Modest; 4—Vinny Massaro; 5—Frank Murdoch; 6—Donovan Morgan; 7—Boom Boom Comini; 8—Nathaniel Sweete; 9—Tony Jones; 10—Chris Ward.

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Rick Deezel; 1—Scorpion; 2—Lamont Steele; 3—Robbie Evil; 4—Jammer; 5—Robert Roma; 6—Chainz; 7—Terminator X; 8—Don Carson; 9—Brian Danzig; 10—Jackie Anderson.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Christian Cage; 1—Mr. Ooh La La; 2—Lance Diamond; 3—Steve Bradley; 4—Christopher Daniels; 5—Steve Richards; 6—Glen Osbourne; 7—Ace Darling; 8—J.J. The Ring Crew Guy; 9—Reckless Youth; 10—Jeff Peterson.

GLOBAL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Steve Sharp; 1—Bull Hansen; 2—Jeff Jett; 3—New York Nightmare; 4—Tim Storm; 5—Treach Phillips Jr.; 6—Blade Boudreaux; 7—Bubba Monroe; 8—Johnny Jett; 9—Bill Ash; 10—James Grizzly.

MIDWEST RENEGADE WRESTLING: Champion—J. Caster; 1—Pete Madden; 2—Madman Pondo; 3—Big Bad Ben; 4—Jack Miller; 5—Ty Dalton; 6—Bull Pain; 7—Deno Blade; 8—Jimmy Snuka; 9—Jacques LaFours; 10—2 Tuff Tony.

NWA GEORGIA: Champion—Frenchy Riviera; 1—Silky Boom Boom; 2—Billy Black; 3—Bart Sawyer; 4—Lord Humongous; 5—Joel Deaton; 6—T.J. Gray; 7—Tiger Khan; 8—David Young; 9—Faku; 10—Vic Violent.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Flash Flanagan; 2—Chris Daniels; 3—Lance Diamond; 4—2 Cold Scorpio; 5—Joe E. Legend; 6—Glen Osbourne; 7—Mr. Ooh La La; 8—El Fuego; 9—Kodiak Bear; 10—Jeff Peterson.

POWERHOUSE CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Cowboy Bob Orton; 1—J.T. Sexxy; 2—The Honky Tonk Man; 3—Rex Hart; 4—Vladimir Romanoff; 5—Rod Bell; 6—Kenny Kouragous; 7—Devon Fury; 8—Jackknife; 9—Chuckie Smothe; 10—Plotr Romanoff.

SOUTHERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Shane Helms; 1—C.W. Anderson; 2—Venom; 3—Otto Schwanz; 4—Toad; 5—Matt Hardy; 6—Major DeBeers; 7—Natrone Steele; 8—Boris Dragoff; 9—Cham Pain; 10—Jeff Hardy.

TEXAS CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Kurt Reigns; 1—Hardbody; 2—Iceman Parsons; 3—Canyon; 4—Tommy Nero; 5—Coach; 6—Mace; 7—Tejas; 8—Militia Man; 9—Action Jackson; 10—Pendragon.

TEXAS WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Chip Riggs; 1—Jason Nash; 2—Johnny Blade; 3—Sid Sexy; 4—Big Jon Murder; 5—Italian Icon; 6—Crash; 7—Dre; 8—Armageddon; 9—Necro Butcher; 10—Tom Cat.

WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—One Man Gang; 1—Mr. Wrestling III; 2—Kevin Northcutt; 3—The Reaper; 4—Tracey Smothers; 5—Sweet Stan Sweetan; 6—Adrian Steel; 7—Tommy Rich; 8—Chris Adidas; 9—Doink; 10—Terry Bryant.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

KEIJI MUTO

(C) 245, Tokyo, Japan

1—KOJI KANEMOTO

(1) 205, Osaka, Japan

2—GENICHIRO TENRYU

(-) 235, Fukui, Japan

3—MASA CHONO

(3) 235, Tokyo, Japan

4—KENSUKE SASAKI

(5) 233, Tokyo, Japan

5—JUSHIN LIGER

(8) 206, Hiroshima, Japan

6—DON FRYE

(2) 205, Sierra Vista, AZ

7—TATSUHIITO TAKAIWA

(-) 224, Chiba, Japan

8—SHINJIRO OTANI

(7) 215, Yokohama, Japan

9—SHIRO KOSHINAKA

(-) 225, Tokyo, Japan

10—HIROYOSHI TENZAN

(10) 270, Tokyo, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

MITSU HARU MISAWA

(1) 228, Saitama, Japan

1—KENTA KOBASHI

(3) 261, Tokyo, Japan

2—VADER

(C) 450, Denver, CO

3—JUN AKIYAMA

(4) 230, Hiroshima, Japan

4—JOHNNY ACE

(10) 250, San Bernardino, CA

5—BART GUNN

(-) 256, Austin, TX

6—AKIRA TAUE

(2) 265, Tokyo, Japan

7—TAKAO OMORI

(9) 221, Tokyo, Japan

8—TOSHIKI KAWADA

(6) 245, Tizhigi, Japan

9—STEVE WILLIAMS

(-) 265, Norman, OK

10—WOLF HAWKFIELD

(-) 272, New Port Richey, FL

EMLL

EMLL Champion:

RAYO DE JALISCO JR.

(C) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico

1—DR. WAGNER JR.

(6) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

2—ULTIMO GUERRERO

(5) 173, Mexico City, Mexico

3—SCORPIO JR.

(2) 195, Nezahualcoyotli, Mexico

4—BLACK WARRIOR

(7) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

5—NEGRO CASAS

(3) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

6—EL HIJO DEL SANTO

(1) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico

7—ZUMBIDO

(4) 210, Acapulco, Mexico

8—BLUE PANTHER

(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

9—MASCARA SAGRADA

(-) 249, Veracruz, Mexico

10—GIANT SILVA

(-) 483, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

AAA

AAA Champion:

PERRO AGUAYO

(C) 220, Zacatecas, Mexico

1—OCTAGON

(5) 180, Monterrey, Mexico

2—PENTAGON

(3) 175, Pachuca, Mexico

3—LATIN LOVER

(9) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

4—PERRO AGUAYO JR.

(8) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico

5—CIBERNETICO

(-) 235, Mexico City, Mexico

6—ABISMO NEGRO

(2) 210, Pachuca, Mexico

7—FELINO

(-) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

8—BLUE DEMON JR.

(6) 180, Toluca, Mexico

9—CHARLY MANSON

(4) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

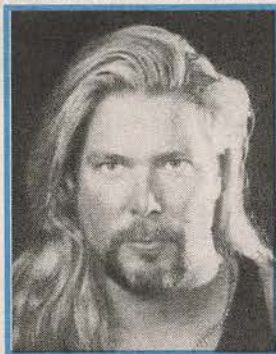
10—HEAVY METAL

(1) 180, Mexico City, Mexico

Ratings

ANALYSIS

Note to Nash ... You might be a little surprised to see **Kevin Nash's** name just below that of WWF



Kevin Nash

World champ **Steve Austin** in our Top 10. Sure, he's the new WCW World champion and all, but you could make the argument that he didn't do much to earn his title shot against "**Diamond**" **Dallas Page** at Slamboree. Remember, **Bill Goldberg** pinned him cleanly at Spring Stampede, the pay-per-view that was held one month earlier.

The only reason Nash got his title shot was that he struck a deal with **Ric Flair** while Flair was World champion and WCW president. Flair guaranteed him the World title match at Slamboree if he made sure Flair didn't lose the belt in a four-way match on *Nitro* in April. Since Flair walked out of that particular match as the champion, Nash got his title shot. But just a few weeks prior to Slamboree, Flair was pinned by Page in yet another four-way World title bout.

So in other words, he didn't have a whole lot of momentum going into his showdown with Page. And he was even pinned by DDP in that match—after **Randy Savage** interfered. But thanks to **Eric Bischoff**, who ordered the match restarted, Nash got another chance. He made good on that opportunity by power-bombing and pinning Page for the championship. Since he did win the match cleanly once it was restarted, we've given him the number-two spot, but we won't necessarily keep him there next month if he's still champion. We want to see him put his belt on the line regularly and win a lot of matches convincingly. Prior to his title win, Nash hadn't been appearing on many WCW arena shows.

The WWF, on the other hand, books Austin on almost all arena cards, assuming he's healthy, and he defends his belt on a good percentage of those cards.

Tag team stuff. Buh Buh Ray and D-Von Dudley moved up a whopping six spots in the tag team ratings this month (to number three), but their victory for their record sixth ECW tag team title

wasn't one of which they could be particularly proud.

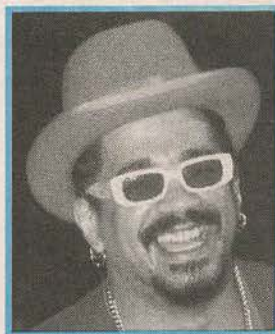
Since **Sabu**, a co-holder of the title, had a fractured jaw and couldn't compete, his partner, **Rob Van Dam**, agreed to defend the title in a singles match against D-Von. It's not the way a tag team title should be defended, though it's hard to blame the Dudleys for seeking such a match, since Sabu and Van Dam had been all but ignoring the tag team belts.

Van Dam turned in a great effort during the match, but he just couldn't overcome the constant interference of Buh Buh Ray and got pinned.

Since the Dudleys looked good in their first few title defenses, we gave them the spot directly under the new WCW World tag team champs, **Perry Saturn** and **Raven**, and the combustible duo of **Kane** and **X-Pac**, the reigning WWF champs.

Defendin' the I-C belt ain't easy ... The **Godfather** grabbed the last spot in our Top 10 this month, and given that he held the WWF Intercontinental championship at press time, you might think we haven't rated him high enough.

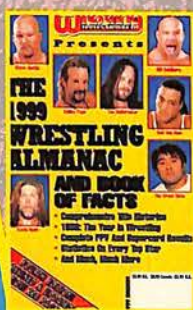
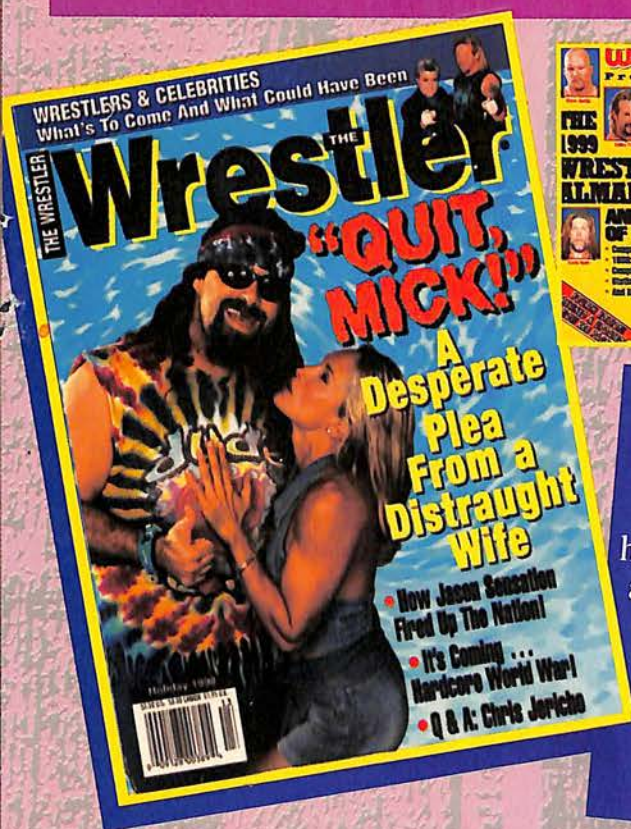
Our reasoning is that as of this writing, he still hadn't defended the belt against tough enough competition to earn a better ranking. He beat **Goldust** cleanly for the belt, sure, but Goldust isn't one of the elite superstars in the WWF right now. Godfather's first few defenses were against **Tiger Ali Singh**, a man who has been struggling big time in recent months. He also took on Goldust in rematches and battled **Jeff Jarrett** on *Raw* in late-April, but if he expects to move into the top five, we'll need to see him beat men like **Ken Shamrock**, **The Undertaker**, or **The Rock**. □



The Godfather

That's all for this month. If you have any questions or thoughts about all the injuries in wrestling right now, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

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